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THE LADY OF THE LAKE

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

BY

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY, A.M.

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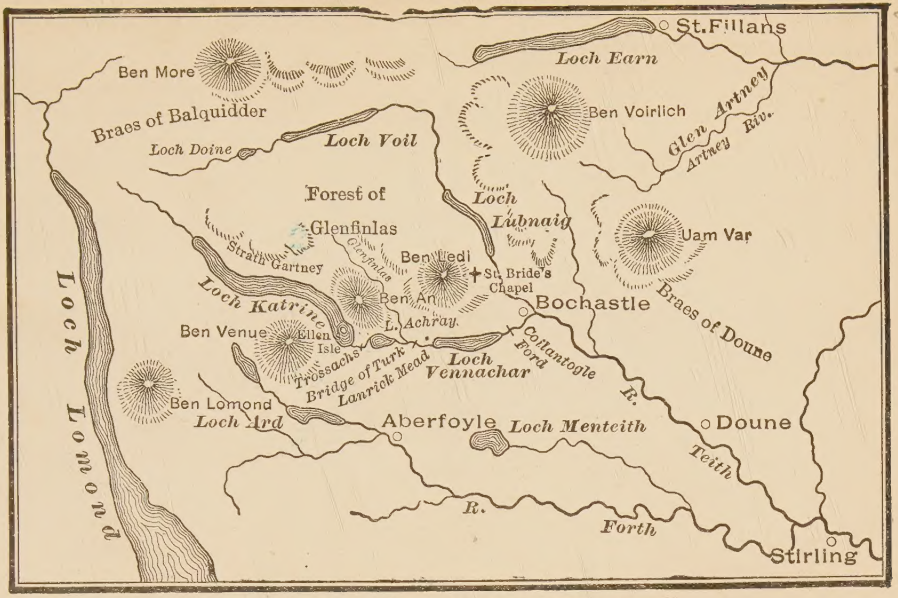

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I. LIFE OF SCOTT

I

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, August 15, 1771, of an ancient Scotch clan numbering in its time many a hard rider and good fighter, and more than one of these petty chieftains, half-shepherd and half-robber, who made good the winter inroads into their stock of beeves by spring forays and cattle drives across the English Border. Scott's great-grandfather was the famous "Beardie" of Harden, so called because after the exile of the Stuart sovereigns he swore never to cut his beard until they were reinstated; and several degrees farther back he could point to a still more famous figure, "Auld Wat of Harden," who with his fair dame, the Flower of Yarrow, is mentioned in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* The first member of the clan to abandon country life and take up a sedentary profession, was Scott's father, who settled in Edinburgh as Writer to the Signet, a position corresponding in Scotland to that of attorney or solicitor in England. The character of this father, stern, scrupulous, Calvinistic, with a high sense of ceremonial dignity and a punctilious regard for the honorable conventions of life, united with the wilder ancestral strain to make Scott what

he was. From "Auld Wat" and "Beardie" came his high spirit, his rugged manliness, his chivalric ideals; from the Writer to the Signet came that power of methodical labor which made him a giant among the literary workers of his day, and that delicate sense of responsibility which gave his private life its remarkable sweetness and beauty.

At the age of eighteen months, Scott was seized with a teething fever which settled in his right leg and retarded its growth to such an extent that he was slightly lame for the rest of his life. Possibly this affliction was a blessing in disguise, since it is not improbable that Scott's love of active adventure would have led him into the army or the navy, if he had not been deterred by a bodily impediment; in which case English history might have been a gainer, but English literature would certainly have been immeasurably a loser. In spite of his lameness, the child grew strong enough to be sent on a long visit to his grandfather's farm at Sandyknowe; and here, lying among the sheep on the windy downs, playing about the romantic ruins of Smailholm Tower,[1] scampering through the heather on a tiny Shetland pony, or listening to stories of the thrilling past told by the old women of the farm, he drank in sensations which strengthened both the hardiness and the romanticism of his nature. A story is told of his being found in the fields during a thunder storm, clapping his hands at each

[1] See Scott's ballad *The Eve of St. John.*

flash of lightning, and shouting "Bonny! Bonny!" —a bit of infantile intrepidity which makes more acceptable a story of another sort illustrative of his mental precocity. A lady entering his mother's room, found him reading aloud a description of a shipwreck, accompanying the words with excited comments and gestures. "There's the mast gone," he cried, "crash it goes; they will all perish!" The lady entered into his agitation with tact, and on her departure, he told his mother that he liked their visitor, because "she was a virtuoso, like himself." To her amused inquiry as to what a virtuoso might be, he replied: "Don't ye know? why, 'tis one who wishes to and will know everything."

As a boy at school in Edinburgh and in Kelso, and afterwards as a student at the University and apprentice in his father's law office, Scott took his own way to become a "virtuoso"; a rather queer way it must sometimes have seemed to his good preceptors. He refused point-blank to learn Greek, and cared little for Latin. His scholarship was so erratic that he glanced meteor-like from the head to the foot of his classes and back again, according as luck gave or withheld the question to which his highly selective memory had retained the answer. But outside of school hours he was intensely at work to "know everything," so far as "everything" came within the bounds of his special tastes. Before he was ten years old he had

begun to collect chap-books and ballads. As he grew older he read omnivorously in romance and history; at school he learned French for the sole purpose of knowing at first hand the fascinating cycles of old French romance; a little later he mastered Italian in order to read Dante and Ariosto, and to his schoolmaster's indignation stoutly championed the claim of the latter poet to superiority over Homer; a little later he acquired Spanish and read *Don Quixote* in the original. With such efforts, however, considerable as they were for a boy who passionately loved a "bicker" in the streets, and who was famed among his comrades for bravery in climbing the perilous "kittle nine stanes" on Castle Rock,—he was not content. Nothing more conclusively shows the genuineness of Scott's romantic feeling than his willingness to undergo severe mental drudgery in pursuit of knowledge concerning the old storied days which had enthralled his imagination. It was no moonshine sentimentality which kept him hour after hour and day after day in the Advocate's Library, poring over musty manuscripts, deciphering heraldic devices, tracing genealogies, and unraveling obscure points of Scottish history. By the time he was twenty-one he had made himself, almost unconsciously, an expert paleographer and antiquarian, whose assistance was sought by professional workers in those branches of knowledge. Carlyle has charged against Scott that he poured

out his vast floods of poetry and romance without preparation or forethought; that his production was always impromptu, and rooted in no sufficient past of acquisition. The charge cannot stand. From his earliest boyhood until his thirtieth year, when he began his brilliant career as poet and novelist, his life was one long preparation,—very individual and erratic preparation, perhaps, but none the less earnest and fruitful.

In 1792, Scott, then twenty-one years old, was admitted a member of the faculty of advocates of Edinburgh. During the five years which elapsed between this date and his marriage, his life was full to overflowing of fun and adventure, rich with genial companionship, and with experience of human nature in all its wild and tame varieties. Ostensibly he was a student of law, and he did, indeed, devote some serious attention to the mastery of his profession. But the dry formalities of legal life his keen humor would not allow him to take quite seriously. On the day when he was called to the bar, while waiting his turn among the other young advocates, he turned to his friend, William Clark, who had been called with him, and whispered, mimicking the Highland lasses who used to stand at the Cross of Edinburgh to be hired for the harvest: "We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, and deil a ane has speered[1] our price." Though Scott never made a legal reputation, either

[1] Asked.

as pleader at the bar or as an authority upon legal history and principles, it cannot be doubted that his experience in the Edinburgh courts was of immense benefit to him. In the first place, his study of the Scotch statutes, statutes which had taken form very gradually under the pressure of changing national conditions, gave him an insight into the politics and society of the past not otherwise to have been obtained. Of still more value, perhaps, was the association with his young companions in the profession, and daily contact with the racy personalities which traditionally haunt all courts of law, and particularly Scotch courts of law: the first association kept him from the affectation and sentimentality which is the bane of the youthful romanticist; and the second enriched his memory with many an odd figure afterward to take its place, clothed in the colors of a great dramatic imagination, upon the stage of his stories.

Added to these experiences, there were others equally calculated to enlarge his conception of human nature. Not the least among these he found in the brilliant literary and artistic society of Edinburgh, to which his mother's social position gave him entrance. Here, when only a lad, he met Robert Burns, then the pet and idol of the fashionable coteries of the capital. Here he heard Henry Mackenzie deliver a lecture on German literature which turned his attention to the

romantic poetry of Germany and led directly to his first attempts at ballad-writing. But much more vital than any or all of these influences, were those endless walking-tours which alone or in company with a boon companion he took over the neighboring country-side,—care-free, roystering expeditions, which he afterwards immortalized as Dandie Dinmont's "Liddesdale raids" in *Guy Mannering*. Thirty miles across country as the crow flies, with no objective point and no errand, a village inn or a shepherd's hut at night, with a crone to sing them an old ballad over the fire, or a group of hardy dalesmen to welcome them with stories and carousal,—these were blithe adventurous days such as could not fail to ripen Scott's already ardent nature, and store his memory with genial knowledge. The account of Dandie Dinmont given by Mr. Shortreed may be taken as a picture, only too true in some of its touches, of Scott in these youthful escapades: "Eh me, . . sic an endless fund of humour and drollery as he had then wi' him. Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man or took ony airs in the company. I've seen him in a' moods in these jaunts, grave and gay, daft and serious, sober and drunk —(this, however, even in our wildest rambles, was but rare)—but drunk or sober, he was aye the

gentleman. He looked excessively heavy an stupid when he was fou, but he was never out gude humour." After this, we are not surprise to hear that Scott's father told him disgusted that he was better fitted to be a fiddling pedlar, "gangrel scrape-gut," than a respectable attorne As a matter of fact, however, behind the ma pranks and the occasional excesses there was a ver serious purpose in all this scouring of the countr side. Scott was picking up here and there, fro the old men and women with whom he hobnobbe antiquarian material of an invaluable kind, bi of local history, immemorial traditions and supe stitions, and, above all, precious ballads which ha been handed down for generations among th peasantry. These ballads, thus precariously tran mitted, it was Scott's ambition to gather togeth and preserve, and he spared no pains or fatigue come at any scrap of ballad literature of who existence he had an inkling. Meanwhile, he w enriching heart and imagination for the work th was before him. So that here also, though in th hair-brained and heady way of youth, he w engaged in his task of preparation.

Scott has told us that it was his reading of *D Quixote* which determined him to be an autho but he was first actually excited to composition another way. This was by hearing recited a ball of the German poet Bürger, entitled *Lenore*, which a skeleton lover carries off his bride to

wedding in the land of death. Mr. Hutton remarks upon the curiousness of the fact that a piece of "raw supernaturalism" like this should have appealed so strongly to a mind as healthy and sane as Scott's. So it was, however. He could not rid himself of the fascination of the piece until he had translated it, and published it, together with another translation from the same author. One stanza at least of this first effort of Scott sounds a note characteristic of his poetry:

> Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
> Splash! splash! along the sea;
> The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
> The flashing pebbles flee.

Here we catch the trumpet-like clang and staccato tramp of verse which he was soon to use in a way to thrill his generation. This tiny pamphlet of verse, Scott's earliest publication, appeared in 1796. Soon after, he met Monk Lewis, then famous as a purveyor to English palates of the crude horrors which German romanticism had just ceased to revel in. Lewis was engaged in compiling a book of supernatural stories and poems under the title of *Tales of Wonder*, and asked Scott to contribute. Scott wrote for this book three long ballads—*Glenfinlas*, *Cadyow Castle*, and *The Gray Brother*. Though tainted with the conventional diction of eighteenth century verse, these ballads are not unimpressive pieces of work; the second named, especially, shows a kind and degree of romantic

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imagination such as his later poetry rather substantiated than newly revealed.

II

In the following year, 1797, Scott married a Miss Charpentier, daughter of a French refugee. She was not his first love, that place having been usurped by a Miss Stuart Belches, for whom Scott had felt perhaps the only deep passion of his life, and memory of whom was to come to the surface touchingly in his old age. Miss Charpentier, or Carpenter, as she was called, with her vivacity and quaint foreign speech "caught his heart on the rebound;" there can be no doubt that, in spite of a certain shallowness of character, she made him a good wife, and that his affection for her deepened steadily to the end. The young couple went to live at Lasswade, a village near Edinburgh, on the Esk. Scott, in whom the proprietary instinct was always very strong, took great pride in the pretty little cottage. He made a dining-table for it with his own hands, planted saplings in the yard, and drew together two willow-trees at the gate into a kind of arch, surmounted by a cross made of two sticks. "After I had constructed this," he says, "mamma (Mrs. Scott) and I both of us thought it so fine that we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the cottage door, in admiration of our magnificence and its picturesque effect." It would have been well

indeed for them both if their pleasures of proprietorship could always have remained so touchingly simple.

Now that he was married, Scott was forced to look a little more sharply to his fortunes. He applied himself with more determination to the law. In 1799 he became deputy-sheriff of Selkirkshire, with a salary of three hundred pounds, which placed him at least beyond the reach of want. He began to look more and more to literature as a means of supplementing his income. His ballads in the *Tales of Wonder* had gained him some reputation; this he increased in 1802 by the publication, under the title *Border Minstrelsy*, of the ballads which he had for several years been collecting, collating, and richly annotating. Meanwhile, he was looking about for a congenial subject upon which to try his hand in a larger way than he had as yet adventured. Such a subject came to him at last in a manner calculated to enlist all his enthusiasm in its treatment, for it was given him by the Countess of Dalkeith, wife of the heir-apparent to the dukedom of Buccleugh. The ducal house of Buccleugh stood at the head of the clan Scott, and toward its representative the poet always held himself in an attitude of feudal reverence. The Duke of Buccleugh was his "chief," entitled to demand from him both passive loyalty and active service; so, at least, Scott loved to interpret their relationship, making effective in

his own case a feudal sentiment which had elsewhere somewhat lapsed. He especially loved to think of himself as the bard of his clan, a modern representative of those rude poets whom the Scottish chiefs once kept as a part of their household to chant the exploits of the clan. Nothing could have pleased his fancy more, therefore, than a request on the part of the lady of his chief to treat a subject of her assigning, namely, the dark mischief-making of a dwarf or goblin who had strayed from his unearthly master and attached himself as page to a human household. The subject fell in with the poet's reigning taste for strong supernaturalism. Gilpin Horner, the goblin page, though he proved in the sequel a difficult character to put to poetic uses, was a figure grotesque and eerie enough to appeal even to Monk Lewis. At first Scott thought of treating the subject in ballad-form, but the scope of treatment was gradually enlarged by several circumstances. To begin with, he chanced upon a copy of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, and the history of that robber baron suggested to him the feasibility of throwing the same vivid light upon the old Border life of his ancestors as Goethe had thrown upon that of the Rhine barons. This led him to subordinate the part played by the goblin page in the proposed story, which was now widened to include elaborate pictures of mediæval life and manners, and to lay the scene in the castle of Branksome, formerly the

stronghold of Scott's and the Duke of Buccleugh's ancestors. The verse form into which the story was thrown was due to a still more accidental circumstance, i. e., Scott's overhearing Sir John Stoddard recite a fragment of Coleridge's unpublished poem *Christabel*. The placing of the story in the mouth of an old harper fallen upon evil days, was a happy afterthought; besides making a beautiful framework for the main poem, it enabled the author to escape criticism for any violent innovations of style, since these could always be attributed to the rude and wild school of poetry to which the harper was supposed to belong. In these ways *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* gradually developed in its present form. Upon its publication in 1805, it achieved an immediate success. The vividness of its descriptive passages, the buoyant rush of its metre, the deep romantic glow suffusing all its pages, took by storm a public familiar to weariness with the decorous abstractions of the eighteenth century poets. The first edition, a sumptuous quarto, was exhausted in a few weeks; an octavo edition of fifteen hundred was sold out within the year; and before 1830, forty-four thousand copies were needed to supply the popular demand. Scott received in all something under eight hundred pounds for the *Lay*, a small amount when contrasted with his gains from subsequent poems, but a sum so unusual nevertheless that he determined

forthwith to devote as much time to literature as he could spare from his legal duties; those he still placed foremost, for until near the close of his life he clung to his adage that literature was "a good staff, but a poor crutch."

A year before the publication of the *Lay*, Scott had removed to the small country seat of Ashestiel, in Selkirkshire, seven miles from the nearest town, Selkirk, and several miles from any neighbor. In the introductions to the various cantos of *Marmion* he has given us a delightful picture of Ashestiel and its surroundings,—the swift Glenkinnon dashing through the estate in a deep ravine, on its way to join the Tweed; behind the house the rising hills beyond which lay the lovely scenery of the Yarrow. The eight years (1804–1812) at Ashestiel were the serenest, and probably the happiest, of Scott's life. Here he wrote his two greatest poems, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. His mornings he spent at his desk, always with a faithful hound at his feet watching the tireless hand as it threw off sheet after sheet of manuscript to make up the day's stint. By one o'clock he was, as he said, "his own man," free to spend the remaining hours of light with his children, his horses, and his dogs, or to indulge himself in his life-long passion for tree-planting. His robust and healthy nature made him excessively fond of all out-of-door sports, especially riding, in which he was daring to foolhardiness. It is a curious fact, noted by Lockhart,

that many of Scott's senses were blunt; he could scarcely, for instance, tell one wine from another by the taste, and once sat quite unconscious at his table while his guests were manifesting extreme uneasiness over the approach of a too-long-kept haunch of venison; but his sight was unusually keen, as his hunting exploits proved. His little son once explained his father's popularity by saying that "it was him that commonly saw the hare sitting." What with hunting, fishing, salmon-spearing by torchlight, gallops over the hills into the Yarrow country, planting and transplanting of his beloved trees, Scott's life at Ashestiel, during the hours when he was "his own man," was a very full and happy one.

Unfortunately, he had already embarked in an enterprise which was destined to overthrow his fortunes just when they seemed fairest. While at school in Kelso he had become intimate with a school fellow named James Ballantyne, and later, when Ballantyne set up a small printing house in Kelso, he had given him his earliest poems to print. After the issue of the *Border Minstrelsy*, the typographical excellence of which attracted attention even in London, he set Ballantyne up in business in Edinburgh, secretly entering the firm himself as silent partner. The good sale of the *Lay* had given the firm an excellent start; but more matter was presently needed to feed the press. To supply it, Scott undertook and completed at

Ashestiel four enormous tasks of editing,—the complete works of Dryden and of Swift, the Somers' Tracts, and the Sadler State Papers. The success of these editions, and the subsequent enormous sale of Scott's poems and novels, would have kept the concern solvent in spite of Ballantyne's complete incapacity for business, but in 1809 Scott plunged recklessly into another and more serious venture. A dispute with Constable, the veteran publisher and bookseller, aggravated by the harsh criticism delivered upon *Marmion* by Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Constable's magazine, determined Scott to set up in connection with the Ballantyne press a rival bookselling concern, and a rival magazine, to be called the *Quarterly Review*. The project was a daring one, in view of Constable's great ability and resources; to make it foolhardy to madness Scott selected to manage the new business a brother of James Ballantyne, a dissipated little buffoon, with about as much business ability and general calibre of character as is connoted by the name which Scott coined for him, "Rigdumfunnidos." The selection of such a man for such a place betrays in Scott's eminently sane and balanced mind a curious strain of impracticality, to say the least; indeed, we are almost constrained to feel with his harsher critics that it betrays something worse than defective judgment,—defective character. His greatest failing, if failing it can be called, was

pride. He could not endure even the mild dictations of a competent publisher, as is shown by his answer to a letter written by one of them proposing some salaried work; he replied curtly that he was a "black Hussar" of literature, and not to be put to such tame service. Probably this haughty dislike of dictation, this imperious desire to patronize rather than be patronized, led him to choose inferior men with whom to enter into business relations. If so, he paid for the fault so dearly that it is hard for a biographer to press the issue against him.

For the present, however, the wind of fortune was blowing fair, and all the storm clouds were below the horizon. In 1808 *Marmion* appeared, and was greeted with an enthusiasm which made the unprecedented reception of the *Lay* seem lukewarm in comparison. *Marmion* contains nothing which was not plainly foreshadowed in the *Lay*, but the hand of the poet has grown more sure, his descriptive effects are less crude and amateurish, the narrative proceeds with a steadier march, the music has gained in volume and in martial vigor. An anecdote is told by Mr. Hutton which will serve as a type of a hundred others illustrative of the extraordinary hold which this poetry took upon the minds of ordinary men. "I have heard," he says, "of two old men—complete strangers—passing each other on a dark London night, when one of them happened to be repeating to himself, just as

Campbell did to the hackney coachmen of the North Bridge of Edinburgh, the last lines of the account of Flodden Field in *Marmion*, 'Charge, Chester, charge,' when suddenly a reply came out of the darkness, 'On, Stanley, on,' whereupon they finished the death of *Marmion* between them, took off their hats to each other, and parted, laughing." *The Lady of the Lake*, which followed in little more than a year, was received with the same popular delight, and with even greater respect on the part of the critics. Even the formidable Jeffrey, who was supposed to dine off slaughtered authors as the Giant in Jack and the Beanstalk dined off young Englishmen, keyed his voice to unwonted praise. The influx of tourists into the Trossachs, where the scene of the poem was laid, was so great as seriously to embarrass the mail coaches, until at last the posting charges had to be raised in order to diminish the traffic. Far away in Spain, at a trying moment of the Peninsular campaign, Sir Adam Ferguson, posted on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's fire, read to his men as they lay prostrate on the ground the passage from *The Lady of the Lake* describing the combat between Roderick Dhu's Highlanders and the forces of the Earl of Mar; and "the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza when the French shot struck the bank close above them." Such tributes—and they were legion—to the power of his poetry to move adventurous and

hardy men, must have been intoxicating to Scott; there is small wonder that the success of his poems gave him, as he says, "such a *heeze* as almost lifted him off his feet."

III

Scott's modesty was not in danger, but so far as his prudence was concerned, his success did really lift him off his feet. In 1812, still more encouraged thereto by entering upon the emoluments of the office of Clerk of Sessions, the duties of which he had performed for six years without pay, he purchased Abbotsford, an estate on the Tweed, adjoining that of the Duke of Buccleugh, his kinsman, and near the beautiful ruins of Melrose Abbey. Here he began to carry out the dream of his life, to found a territorial family which should augment the power and fame of his clan. Beginning with a modest farm house and a farm of a hundred acres, he gradually bought, planted, and built, until the farm became a manorial domain and the farm house a castle. He had not gone far in this work before he began to realize that the returns from his poetry would never suffice to meet such demands as would thus be made upon his purse. Byron's star was in the ascendant, and before its baleful magnificence Scott's milder and more genial light visibly paled. He was himself the first to declare, with characteristic generosity,

that the younger poet had "bet"[1] him at his own craft. As Carlyle says, "he had held the sovereignty for some half-score of years, a comparatively long lease of it, and now the time seemed come for dethronement, for abdication. An unpleasant business; which, however, he held himself ready, as a brave man will, to transact with composure and in silence."

But, as it proved, there was no need for resignation. The reign of metrical romance, brilliant but brief, was past, or nearly so. But what of prose romance, which long ago, in picking out *Don Quixote* from the puzzling Spanish, he had promised himself he would one day attempt? With some such questioning of the Fates, Scott drew from his desk the sheets of a story begun seven years before, and abandoned because of the success of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* This story he now completed, and published as *Waverley* in the spring of 1814,—an event "memorable in the annals of British literature; in the annals of British bookselling thrice and four times memorable." The popularity of the metrical romances dwindled to insignificance before the enthusiasm with which this prose romance was received. A moment before quietly resolved to give up his place in the world's eye, and to live the life of an obscure country gentleman, Scott found himself launched once more on the tide of brave fortunes.

[1] Bested, got the better of.

The Ballantyne publishing and printing houses ceased to totter, and settled themselves on what seemed the firmest of foundations. At Abbotsford, buying, planting, and building began on a greater scale than had ever been planned in its owner's most sanguine moments.

The history of the next eleven years in Scott's life is the history, on the one hand, of the rapidly-appearing novels, of a fame gradually spreading outward from Great Britain until it covered the civilized world,—a fame increased rather than diminished by the *incognito* which the "author of *Waverley*" took great pains to preserve even after the secret had become an open one; on the other hand, of the large-hearted, hospitable life at Abbotsford, where, in spite of the importunities of curious and ill-bred tourists, bent on getting a glimpse of the "Wizard of the North," and in spite of the enormous mass of work, literary and official, which Scott took upon himself to perform, the atmosphere of country leisure and merriment was somehow miraculously preserved. This life of the hearty prosperous country laird was the one toward the realization of which all Scott's efforts were directed; it is worth while, therefore, to see as vividly as may be, what kind of life that was, that we may the better understand what kind of man he was who cared for it. The following extract from Lockhart's *Life of Scott* gives us at least one very characteristic aspect of the Abbotsford world:

"It was a clear, bright September morning, with a sharpness in the air that doubled the animating influence of the sunshine; and all was in readiness for a grand coursing-match on Newark Hill. The only guest who had chalked out other sport for himself was the staunchest of anglers, Mr. Rose; but he, too, was there on his *shelty*, armed with his salmon-rod and landing-net. . . . This little group of Waltonians, bound for Lord Somerville's preserve, remained lounging about, to witness the start of the main cavalcade. Sir Walter, mounted on Sibyl, was marshalling the order of procession with a huge hunting-whip; and among a dozen frolicsome youths and maidens, who seemed disposed to laugh at all discipline, appeared, each on horseback, each as eager as the youngest sportsman in the troop, Sir Humphrey Davy, Dr. Wollaston, and the patriarch of Scottish belles-lettres, Henry Mackenzie. . . . Laidlaw (the steward of Abbotsford) on a strong-tailed wiry Highlander, yclept Hoddin Grey, which carried him nimbly and stoutly, although his feet almost touched the ground, was the adjutant. But the most picturesque figure was the illustrious inventor of the safety-lamp (Sir Humphrey Davy) . . . a brown hat with flexible brim, surrounded with line upon line of catgut, and innumerable fly-hooks; jack-boots worthy of a Dutch smuggler, and a fustian surtout dabbled with the blood of salmon, made a fine contrast with the smart jacket, white-cord breeches, and well-polished jockey-boots of the less distinguished cavaliers about him. Dr. Wollaston was in black; and with his noble serene dignity of countenance might have passed for a sporting archbishop. Mr. Mackenzie, at this time in the seventy-sixth year of his age, with a hat turned up

with green, green spectacles, green jacket, and long brown leathern gaiters buttoned upon his nether anatomy, wore a dog-whistle round his neck. . . Tom Purdie (one of Scott's servants) and his subalterns had preceded us by a few hours with all the grey-hounds that could be collected at Abbotsford, Darnick, and Melrose; but the giant Maida had remained as his master's orderly, and now gambolled about Sibyl Grey, barking for mere joy like a spaniel puppy.

"The order of march had all been settled, when Scott's daughter Anne broke from the line, screaming with laughter, and exclaimed, 'Papa, papa, I knew you could never think of going without your pet!' Scott looked round, and I rather think there was a blush as well as a smile upon his face, when he perceived a little black pig frisking about his pony, evidently a self-elected addition to the party of the day. He tried to look stern, and cracked his whip at the creature, but was in a moment obliged to join in the general cheers. Poor piggy soon found a strap round its neck, and was dragged into the background; Scott, watching the retreat, repeated with mock pathos the first verse of an old pastoral song—

> 'What will I do gin my hoggie die?
> My joy, my pride, my hoggie!
> My only beast, I had na mae,
> And wow, but I was vogie!'

—the cheers were redoubled—and the squadron moved on."

Let us supplement this with one more picture, from the same hand, showing Scott in a little more intimate light. The passage was written in 1821, after Lockhart had married Scott's eldest daughter,

and gone to spend the summer at Chiefswood, a cottage on the Abbotsford estate:

"We were near enough Abbotsford to partake as often as we liked of its brilliant and constantly varying society; yet could do so without being exposed to the worry and exhaustion of spirit which the daily reception of new-comers entailed upon all the family, except Scott himself. But in truth, even he was not always proof against the annoyances connected with such a style of open house-keeping. . . . When sore beset at home in this way, he would every now and then discover that he had some very particular business to attend to on an outlying part of his estate, and craving the indulgence of his guests overnight, appear at the cabin in the glen before its inhabitants were astir in the morning. The clatter of Sibyl Grey's hoofs, the yelping of Mustard and Spice, and his own joyous shout of *réveillée* under our windows, were the signal that he had burst his toils, and meant for that day to 'take his ease in his inn.' On descending, he was found to be seated with all his dogs and ours about him, under a spreading ash that overshadowed half the bank between the cottage and the brook, pointing the edge of his woodman's axe, and listening to Tom Purdie's lecture touching the plantation that most needed thinning. After breakfast he would take possession of a dressing-room upstairs, and write a chapter of *The Pirate*; and then, having made up and despatched his packet for Mr. Ballantyne, away to join Purdie wherever the foresters were at work . . . until it was time to rejoin his own party at Abbotsford, or the quiet circle of the cottage. When his guests were few and friendly, he often

made them come over and meet him at Chiefswood in a body towards evening. . . . He was ready with all sorts of devices to supply the wants of a narrow establishment; he used to delight particularly in sinking the wine in a well under the *brae* ere he went out, and hauling up the basket just before dinner was announced,—this primitive device being, he said, what he had always practised when a young housekeeper, and in his opinion far superior in its results to any application of ice; and in the same spirit, whenever the weather was sufficiently genial, he voted for dining out of doors altogether."

Few events of importance except the successive appearances of "our buiks," as Tom Purdie called his master's novels, and an occasional visit to London or the continent, intervened to break the busy monotony of this Abbotsford life. On one of these visits to London, Scott was invited to dine with the Prince Regent, and when the prince became King George IV., in 1820, almost the first act of his reign was to create Scott a baronet. Scott accepted the honor gratefully, as coming, he said, "from the original source of all honor." There can well be two opinions as to whether this least admirable of English kings constituted a very prime fountain of honor, judged by democratic standards; but to Scott's mind, such an imputation would have been next to sacrilege. The feudal bias of his mind, strong to start with, had been strengthened by his long sojourn among the visions of a feudal past; the ideals of feudalism were living

realities to him; and he accepted knighthood from his king's hand in exactly the same spirit which determined his attitude of humility towards his "chief," the Duke of Buccleugh, and which impelled him to exhaust his genius in the effort to build up a great family estate.

There were already signs that the enormous burden of work under which he seemed to move so lightly, was telling on him. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Legend of Montrose*, and *Ivanhoe*, had all of them been dictated between screams of pain, wrung from his lips by a chronic cramp of the stomach. By the time he reached *Redgauntlet* and *St. Ronan's Well*, there began to be heard faint murmurings of discontent from his public, hints that he was writing too fast, and that the noble wine he had poured them for so long was growing at last a trifle watery. To add to these causes of uneasiness, the commercial ventures in which he was interested drifted again into a precarious state. He had himself fallen into the bad habit of forestalling the gains from his novels by heavy drafts on his publishers, and the example thus set was followed faithfully by John Ballantyne. Scott's good humor and his partner's bad judgment saddled the concern with a lot of unsalable books. In 1818 the affairs of the book-selling business had to be closed up, Constable taking over the unsalable stock and assuming the outstanding liabilities in return for copyright privileges covering some of Scott's

novels. This so burdened the veteran publisher that when, in 1825, a large London firm failed, it carried him down also—and with him James Ballantyne, with whom he had entered into close relations. Scott's secret connection with Ballantyne had continued; accordingly he woke up one fine day to find himself worse than beggared, being personally liable for one hundred and thirty thousand pounds.

IV

The years intervening between this calamity and Scott's death form one of the saddest and at the same time most heroic chapters in the history of literature. The fragile health of Lady Scott succumbed almost immediately to the crushing blow, and she died in a few months. Scott surrendered Abbotsford to his creditors and took up humble lodgings in Edinburgh. Here, with a pride and stoical courage as quiet as it was splendid, he settled down to fill with the earnings of his pen the vast gulf of debt for which he was morally scarcely responsible at all. In three years he wrote *Woodstock*, three *Chronicles of the Canongate*, the *Fair Maid of Perth*, *Anne of Geierstein*, the first series of the *Tales of a Grandfather*, and a *Life of Napoleon*, equal to thirteen volumes of novel size, besides editing and annotating a complete edition of his own works. All these together netted his creditors £40,000. Touched by the efforts he was

making to settle their claims, they now presented him with Abbotsford, and thither he returned to spend the few years remaining to him. In 1830 he suffered a first stroke of paralysis; refusing to give up, however, he made one more desperate rally to recapture his old power of story-telling. *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous* were the pathetic result; they are not to be taken into account in any estimate of his powers, for they are manifestly the work of a paralytic patient. The gloomy picture is darkened by an incident which illustrates strikingly one phase of Scott's character.

The great Reform Bill was being discussed throughout Scotland, menacing what were really abuses, but what Scott, with his intense conservatism, believed to be sacred and inviolable institutions. The dying man roused himself to make a stand against the abominable bill. In a speech which he made at Jedburgh, he was hissed and hooted by the crowd, and he left the town with the dastardly cry of "Burk Sir Walter!" ringing in his ears.

Nature now intervened to ease the intolerable strain. Scott's anxiety concerning his debt gradually gave way to an hallucination that it had all been paid. His friends took advantage of the quietude which followed to induce him to make the journey to Italy, in the fear that the severe winter of Scotland would prove fatal. A ship of His Majesty's fleet was put at his disposal, and he set

sail for Malta. The youthful adventurousness of the man flared up again oddly for a moment, when he insisted on being set ashore upon a volcanic island in the Mediterranean which had appeared but a few days before and which sank beneath the surface shortly after. The climate of Malta at first appeared to benefit him; but when he heard, one day, of the death of Goethe at Weimar, he seemed seized with a sudden apprehension of his own end, and insisted upon hurrying back through Europe, in order that he might look once more on Abbotsford. On the ride from Edinburgh he remained for the first two stages entirely unconscious. But as the carriage entered the valley of the Gala he opened his eyes and murmured the name of objects as they passed, "Gala water, surely,—Buckholm,—Torwoodlee." When the towers of Abbotsford came in view, he was so filled with delight that he could scarcely be restrained from leaping out. At the gates he greeted faithful Laidlaw in a voice strong and hearty as of old: "Why, man, how often I have thought of you!" and smiled and wept over the dogs who came rushing as in bygone times to lick his hand. He died a few days later, on the afternoon of a glorious autumn day, with all the windows open, so that he might catch to the last the whisper of the Tweed over its pebbles.

"And so," says Carlyle, "the curtain falls; and the strong Walter Scott is with us no more. A

possession from him does remain; widely scattered; yet attainable; not inconsiderable. It can be said of him, when he departed, he took a Man's life along with him. No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of Time. Alas, his fine Scotch face, with its shaggy honesty, sagacity and goodness, when we saw it latterly on the Edinburgh streets, was all worn with care, the joy all fled from it;—ploughed deep with labour and sorrow. We shall never forget it; we shall never see it again. Adieu, Sir Walter, pride of all Scotchmen, take our proud and sad farewell."

II. SCOTT'S PLACE IN THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

In order rightly to appreciate the poetry of Scott it is necessary to understand something of that remarkable "Romantic Movement" which took place toward the end of the eighteenth century, and within a space of twenty-five years completely changed the face of English literature. Both the causes and the effects of this movement were much more than merely literary; the "romantic revival" penetrated every crevice and ramification of life in those parts of Europe which it affected; its social, political, and religious results were all deeply significant. But we must here confine ourselves to such aspects of the revival as showed themselves in English poetry.

Eighteenth century poetry had been distinguished by its polish, its formal correctness, or—to use a term in much favor with critics of that day—its "elegance." The various and wayward metrical effects of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets, had been discarded for a few well-recognized verse forms, which themselves in turn had become still further limited by the application to them of precise rules of structure. Hand in hand with this restricting process in metre, had gone a similar

tendency in diction. The simple, concrete phrases of daily speech had given way to stately periphrases; the rich and riotous vocabulary of earlier poetry had been replaced by one more decorous, measured, and high-sounding. A corresponding process of selection and exclusion was applied to the subject matter of poetry. Passion, lyric exaltation, delight in the concrete life of man and nature, passed out of fashion; in their stead came social satire, criticism, generalized observation. While the classical influence, as it is usually called, was at its height, with such men as Dryden and Pope to exemplify it, it did a great work; but toward the end of the eighth decade of the eighteenth century it had visibly run to seed. The feeble Hayley, the silly Della Crusca, the arid Erasmus Darwin, were its only exemplars. England was ripe for a literary revolution, a return to nature and to passion; and such a revolution was not slow in coming.

It announced itself first in George Crabbe, who turned to paint the life of the poor with patient realism; in Burns, who poured out in his songs the passion of love, the passion of sorrow, the passion of conviviality; in Blake, who tried to reach across the horizon of visible fact to mystical heavens of more enduring reality. Following close upon these men came the four poets destined to accomplish the revolution which the early comers had begun. They were born within four years of each other, Wordsworth in 1770, Scott in 1771, Coleridge in

1772, Southey in 1774. As we look at these four men now, and estimate their worth as poets, we see that Southey drops almost out of the account, and that Wordsworth and Coleridge stand, so far as the highest qualities of poetry go, far above Scott, as, indeed, Blake and Burns do also. But the contemporary judgment upon them was directly the reverse; and Scott's poetry exercised an influence over his age immeasurably greater than that of any of the other three. Let us attempt to discover what qualities this poetry possessed which gave it its astonishing hold upon the age when it was written. In so doing, we may discover indirectly some of the reasons why it still retains a large portion of its popularity, and perhaps arrive at some grounds of judgment by which we may test its right thereto.

One reason why Scott's poetry was immediately welcomed, while that of Wordsworth and of Coleridge lay neglected, is to be found in the fact that in the matter of diction Scott was much less revolutionary than they. By nature and education he was conservative; he put *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* into the mouth of a rude harper of the North in order to shield himself from the charge of "attempting to set up a new school in poetry," and he never throughout his life violated the conventions, literary or social, if he could possibly avoid doing so. This bias toward conservatism and conventionality shows itself particularly in the

language of his poems. He was compelled, of course, to use much more concrete and vivid terms than the eighteenth century poets had used, because he was dealing with much more concrete and vivid matter; but his language, nevertheless, has a prevailing stateliness, and at times an artificiality, which recommended it to readers tired of the inanities of Hayley and Mason, but unwilling to accept the startling simplicity and concreteness of diction exemplified by the Lake poets at their best.

Another peculiarity of Scott's poetry which made powerfully for its popularity, was its spirited metre. People were weary of the heroic couplet, and turned eagerly to these hurried verses, that went on their way with the sharp tramp of moss-troopers, and heated the blood like a drum. The metres of Coleridge, subtle, delicate, and poignant, had been passed by with indifference,—had not been heard perhaps, for lack of ears trained to hear; but Scott's metrical effects were such as a child could appreciate, and a soldier could carry in his head.

Analogous to this treatment of metre, though belonging to a less formal side of his art, was Scott's treatment of nature, the landscape setting of his stories. Perhaps the most obvious feature of the romantic revival was a reawakening of interest in out-door nature. It was as if for a hundred years past people had been stricken blind as soon as they passed from the city streets into

the country. A trim garden, an artfully placed country house, a well-kept preserve, they might see; but for the great shaggy world of mountain and sea—it had been shut out of man's elegant vision. Before Scott began to write there had been no lack of prophets of the new nature-worship, but none of them of a sort to catch the general ear. Wordsworth's pantheism was too mystical, too delicate and intuitive, to recommend itself to any but chosen spirits; Crabbe's descriptions were too minute, Coleridge's too intense, to please. Scott was the first to paint nature with a broad, free touch, without raptures or philosophizing, but with a healthy pleasure in its obvious beauties, such as appeal to average men. His "scenery" seldom exists for its own sake, but serves, as it should, for background and setting of his story. As his readers followed the fortunes of William of Deloraine or Roderick Dhu, they traversed by sunlight and by moonlight landscapes of wild romantic charm, and felt their beauty quite naturally, as a part of the excitement of that wild life. They felt it the more readily because of a touch of artificial stateliness in the handling, a slight theatrical heightening of effect—from an absolute point of view a defect, but highly congenial to the taste of the time. It was the scenic side of nature which Scott gave, and gave inimitably, while Burns was piercing to the inner heart of her tenderness in his lines *To a Mountain Daisy*,

and *To a Mouse*, while Wordsworth was mystically communing with her soul, in his *Tintern Abbey*. It was the scenic side of nature for which the perceptions of men were ripe; so they left profounder poets to their musings, and followed after the poet who could give them a brilliant story set in a brilliant scene.

Again, the emotional key of Scott's poetry was on a comprehensible plane. The situations with which he deals, the passions, ambitions, satisfactions, which he portrays, belong, in one form or another, to all men, or at least are easily grasped by the imaginations of all men. It has often been said that Scott is the most Homeric of English poets; so far as the claim rests on considerations of style, it is hardly to be granted, for nothing could be farther than the hurrying torrent of Scott's verse from the "long and refluent music" of Homer. But in this other respect, that he deals in the rudimentary stuff of human character in a straightforward way, without a hint of modern complexities and super-subtleties, he is really akin to the master poet of antiquity. This, added to the crude wild life which he pictures, the vigorous sweep of his action, the sincere glow of romance which bathes his story—all so tonic in their effect upon minds long used to the stuffy decorum of didactic poetry, completed the triumph of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake*, over their age.

As has been already suggested, Scott cannot be put in the first rank of poets. No compromise can be made on this point, because upon it the whole theory of poetry depends. Neither on the formal nor on the essential sides of his art is he among the small company of the supreme. And no one understood this better than himself. He touched the keynote of his own power, though with too great modesty, when he said, "I am sensible that if there is anything good about my poetry . . . . it is a hurried frankness of composition which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active dispositions." The poet Campbell, who was so fascinated by Scott's ballad of *Cadyow Castle* that he used to repeat it aloud on the North Bridge of Edinburgh until "the whole fraternity of coachmen knew him by tongue as he passed," characterizes the predominant charm of Scott's poetry as lying in a "strong, pithy eloquence," which is perhaps only another name for "hurried frankness of composition." If this is not the highest quality to which poetry can attain, it is a very admirable one; and it will be a sad day for the English-speaking race when there shall not be found persons of every age and walk of life, to take the same delights in these stirring poems as their author loved to think was taken by "soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active dispositions."

III—THE LADY OF THE LAKE

I—HISTORICAL SETTING

The Lady of the Lake deals with a distinct epoch in the life of King James V of Scotland, and has lying back of it a considerable amount of historical fact, an understanding of which will help in the appreciation of the poem. During his minority the king was under the tutelage of Archibald Douglas, sixth Earl of Angus, who had married the king's mother. The young monarch chafed for a long time under this authority, but the Douglasses were so powerful that he was unable to shake it off, in spite of several desperate attempts on the part of his sympathizers to rescue him. In 1528 the king, then sixteen years of age, escaped from his own castle of Falkland to Stirling Castle. The governor of Stirling, an enemy of the Douglas family, received him joyfully. There soon gathered about his standard a sufficient number of powerful peers to enable him to depose the Earl of Angus from the regency and to banish him and all his family to England. The Douglas who figures in the poem is an imaginary uncle of the banished regent, and himself under the ban, compelled to hide away in the shelter provided for him by Roderick Dhu on the lonely island in Loch

Katrine. He is represented as having been loved and trusted by King James during the boyhood of the latter, before the enmity sprung up between the house of Angus and the throne. This enmity, to quote from the *History of the House of Douglas*, published at Edinburgh in 1743, "was so inveterate, that numerous as their allies were, their nearest friends, even in the most remote parts of Scotland, durst not entertain them, unless under the strictest and closest disguise."

The outlawed border chieftain, Roderick Dhu, who gives shelter to the persecuted Douglas, is a fictitious character, but one entirely typical of the time and place. The expedition undertaken by the young king against the Border clans, under the guise of a hunting party, is in part, at least, historic. Pitscottie's history says: "In 1529 James V made a convention at Edinburgh for the purpose of considering the best mode of quelling the Border robbers, who, during the license of his minority and the troubles which followed, had committed many exorbitances. Accordingly, he assembled a flying army of ten thousand men, consisting of his principal nobility and their followers, who were directed to bring their hawks and dogs with them, that the monarch might refresh himself with sport during the intervals of military execution. With this array he swept through Ettrick forest, where he hanged over the gate of his own castle Piers Cockburn of

Henderland, who had prepared, according to tradition, a feast for his reception."

II—GENERAL CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS

The Lady of the Lake appeared in 1810. Two years before, *Marmion* had vastly increased the popular enthusiasm aroused by *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and the success of his second long poem had so exhilarated Scott that, as he says, he "felt equal to anything and everything." To one of his kinswomen, who urged him not to jeopardize his fame by another effort in the same kind, he gaily quoted the words of Montrose:

> He either fears his fate too much
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

The result justified his confidence; for not only was *The Lady of the Lake* as successful as its predecessors, but it remains the most sterling of Scott's poems. The somewhat cheap supernaturalism of the *Lay* appears in it only for a moment; both the story and the characters are of a less theatrical type than in *Marmion;* and it has a glow, animation, and onset, which was denied to the later poems, *Rokeby* and *The Lord of the Isles.*

The following outline abridged from the excellent one given by Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh*

Review for August, 1810, will be useful as a basis for criticism of the matter and style of the poem.

"The first canto begins with a description of a staghunt in the Highlands of Perthshire. As the chase lengthens, the sportsmen drop off; till at last the foremost horseman is left alone; and his horse, overcome with fatigue, stumbles and dies. The adventurer, climbing up a craggy eminence, discovers Loch Katrine spread out in evening glory before him. The huntsman winds his horn; and sees, to his infinite surprise, a little skiff, guided by a lovely woman, glide from beneath the trees that overhang the water, and approach the shore at his feet. Upon the stranger's approach, she pushes the shallop from the shore in alarm. After a short parley, however, she carries him to a woody island, where she leads him into a sort of sylvan mansion, rudely constructed, and hung round with trophies of war and the chase. An elderly lady is introduced at supper; and the stranger, after disclosing himself to be 'James Fitz-James, the knight of Snowdoun,' tries in vain to discover the name and history of the ladies.

"The second canto opens with a picture of the aged harper, Allan-bane, sitting on the island beach with the damsel, watching the skiff which carries the stranger back to land. A conversation ensues, from which the reader gathers that the lady is a daughter of the Douglas, who, being exiled by royal displeasure from court, had accepted this asylum from Sir Roderick Dhu, a Highland chieftain long outlawed for deeds of blood; that this dark chief is in love with his fair *protégée*, but that her affections are engaged to Malcolm Græme, a younger and more amiable mountaineer. The sound of distant music is heard

on the lake; and the barges of Sir Roderick are discovered, proceeding in triumph to the island. Ellen, hearing her father's horn at that instant on the opposite shore, flies to meet him and Malcolm Græme, who is received with cold and stately civility by the lord of the isle. Sir Roderick informs the Douglas that his retreat has been discovered, and that the King (James V), under pretence of hunting, has assembled a large force in the neighborhood. He then proposes impetuously that they should unite their fortunes by his marriage with Ellen, and rouse the whole Western Highlands. The Douglas, intimating that his daughter has repugnances which she cannot overcome, declares that he will retire to a cave in the neighboring mountains until the issue of the King's threat is seen. The heart of Roderick is wrung with agony at this rejection; and when Malcolm advances to Ellen, he pushes him violently back—and a scuffle ensues, which is with difficulty appeased by the giant arm of Douglas. Malcolm then withdraws in proud resentment, plunges into the water, and swims over by moonlight to the mainland.

"The third canto opens with an account of the ceremonies employed in summoning the clan. This is accomplished by the consecration of a small wooden cross, which, with its points scorched and dipped in blood, is carried with incredible celerity though the whole territory of the chieftain. The eager fidelity with which this fatal signal is carried on, is represented with great spirit. A youth starts from the side of his father's coffin, to bear it forward, and, having run his stage, delivers it to a young bridegroom returning from church, who instantly binds his plaid around him, and rushes

onward. In the meantime Douglas and his daughter have taken refuge in the mountain cave; and Sir Roderick, passing near their retreat on his way to the muster, hears Ellen's voice singing her evening hymn to the Virgin. He does not obtrude on her devotions, but hurries to the place of rendezvous.

"The fourth canto begins with some ceremonies by a wild hermit of the clan, to ascertain the issue of the impending war; and this oracle is obtained —that the party shall prevail which first sheds the blood of its adversary. The scene then shifts to the retreat of the Douglas, where the minstrel is trying to soothe Ellen in her alarm at the disappearance of her father, by singing a fairy ballad to her. As the song ends, the knight of Snowdoun suddenly appears before her, declares his love, and urges her to put herself under his protection. Ellen throws herself on his generosity, confesses her attachment to Græme, and prevails on him to seek his own safety by a speedy retreat from the territory of Roderick Dhu. Before he goes, the stranger presents her with a ring, which he says he has received from King James, with a promise to grant any boon asked by the person producing it. As he retreats, his suspicions are excited by the conduct of his guide, and confirmed by the warnings of a mad woman whom they encounter. His false guide discharges an arrow at him, which kills the maniac. The knight slays the murderer; and learning from the expiring victim that her brain had been turned by the cruelty of Sir Roderick Dhu, he vows vengeance. When chilled with the midnight cold and exhausted with fatigue, he suddenly comes upon a chief reposing by a lonely watch-fire; and being challenged in the name of

Roderick Dhu, boldly avows himself his enemy. The clansman, however, disdains to take advantage of a worn-out wanderer; and pledges him safe escort out of Sir Roderick's territory, when he must answer his defiance with his sword. The stranger accepts these chivalrous terms; and the warriors sup and sleep together. This ends the fourth canto.

"At dawn, the knight and the mountaineer proceed toward the Lowland frontier. A dispute arises concerning the character of Roderick Dhu, and the knight expresses his desire to meet in person and do vengeance upon the predatory chief. 'Have then thy wish!' answers his guide; and gives a loud whistle. A whole legion of armed men start up from their mountain ambush in the heath; while the chief turns proudly and says, 'I am Roderick Dhu!' Sir Roderick then by a signal dismisses his men to their concealment. Arrived at his frontier, the chief forces the knight to stand upon his defense. Roderick, after a hard combat is laid wounded on the ground; Fitz-James, sounding his bugle, brings four squires to his side; and, after giving the wounded chief into their charge, gallops rapidly on towards Stirling. As he ascends the hill to the castle, he descries approaching the same place the giant form of Douglas, who has come to deliver himself up to the king, in order to save Malcolm Græme and Sir Roderick from the impending danger. Before entering the castle, Douglas is seized with the whim to engage in the holiday sports which are going forward outside; he wins prize after prize, and receives his reward from the hand of the prince, who, however, does not condescend to recognize his former favorite. Roused at last by an insult from one of the royal

grooms, Douglas proclaims himself, and is ordered into custody by the king. At this instant a messenger arrives with tidings of an approaching battle between the clan of Roderick and the King's lieutenant, the Earl of Mar; and is ordered back to prevent the conflict, by announcing that both Sir Roderick and Lord Douglas are in the hands of their sovereign.

"The last canto opens in the guard room of the royal castle at Stirling, at dawn. While the mercenaries are quarrelling and singing at the close of a night of debauch, the sentinels introduce Ellen and the minstrel Allan-bane—who are come in search of Douglas. Ellen awes the ruffian soldiery by her grace and liberality, and is at length conducted to a more seemly waiting place, until she may obtain audience with the king. While Allan-bane, in the cell of Sir Roderick, sings to the dying chieftain of the glorious battle which has just been waged by his clansmen against the forces of the Earl of Mar, Ellen, in another part of the palace, hears the voice of Malcolm Græme lamenting his captivity from an adjoining turret. Before she recovers from her agitation she is startled by the appearance of Fitz-James, who comes to inform her that the court is assembled, and the king at leisure to receive her suit. He conducts her to the hall of presence, round which Ellen casts a timid and eager glance for the monarch. But all the glittering figures are uncovered, and James Fitz-James alone wears his cap and plume! The Knight of Snowdoun is the King of Scotland! Struck with awe and terror, Ellen falls speechless at his feet, pointing to the ring which he has put upon her finger. The prince raises her with eager kindness, declares that her father is forgiven, and

bids her ask a boon for some other person. The name of Græme trembles on her lips, but she cannot trust herself to utter it. The king, in playful vengeance, condemns Malcolm Græme to fetters, takes a chain of gold from his own neck, and throwing it over that of the young chief, puts the clasp in the hand of Ellen."

From this outline, it will be evident that Scott had gained greatly in narrative power since the production of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Not only are the elements of the "fable" (to use the word in its old-fashioned sense) harmonious and probable, but the various incidents grow out of each other in a natural and necessary way. The *Lay* was at best a skilful bit of carpentering whereof the several parts were nicely juxtaposed; *The Lady of the Lake* is an organism, and its several members partake of a common life. A few weaknesses may, it is true, be pointed out in it. The warning of Fitz-James by the mad woman's song makes too large a draft upon our romantic credulity. Her appearance is at once so accidental and so opportune that it resembles those supernatural interventions employed by ancient tragedy to cut the knot of a difficult situation, which have given rise to the phrase *deus ex machina*. The improbability of the episode is further increased by the fact that she puts her warning in the form of a song. Scott's love of romantic episode manifestly led him astray here. Further, the story as a whole shares with all stories which turn upon the

revelation of a concealed identity, the disadvantage of being able to affect the reader powerfully but once, since on a second reading the element of suspense and surprise is lacking. In so far as *The Lady of the Lake* is a mere story, or as it has been called, a "versified novelette," this is not a weakness; but in so far as it is a poem, with the claim which poetry legitimately makes to be read and re-read for its intrinsic beauty, it constitutes a real defect.

Not only does this poem, with the slight exceptions just mentioned, show a gain over the earlier poems in narrative power, but it also marks an advance in character delineation. The characters of the *Lay* are, with one or two exceptions, mere lay-figures; Lord Cranstoun and Margaret are the most conventional of lovers; William of Deloraine is little more than an animated suit of armor, and the Lady of Branksome, except at one point, when from her walls she defies the English invaders, is nearly or quite featureless. With the characters of *The Lady of the Lake* the case is very different. The three rivals for Ellen's hand are real men, with individualities which enhance and deepen the picturesqueness of each other by contrast. The easy grace and courtly chivalry, of the disguised king, the quick kindling of his fancy at sight of the mysterious maid of Loch Katrine, his quick generosity in relinquishing his suit when he finds that she loves

another, make him one of the most life-like figures of romance. Roderick Dhu, nursing darkly his clannish hatreds, his hopeless love, and his bitter jealousy, with a delicate chivalry sending its bright thread through the tissue of his savage nature, is drawn with an equally convincing hand. Against his gloomy figure the boyish magnanimity of Malcolm Græme, Ellen's brave faithfulness, made human by a surface play of coquetry, and the quiet nobility of the exiled Douglas, stand out in varied relief. Judged in connection with the more conventional character types of *Marmion*, and with the draped automatons of the *Lay*, the characters of *The Lady of the Lake* show the gradual growth in Scott of that dramatic imagination which was later to fill the vast scene of his prose romances with unforgettable figures.

But the most significant advance which this poem shows over earlier work is in the greater genuineness of the poetic effect. In the description, for example, of the approach of Roderick Dhu's boats to the island, there is a singular depth of race feeling. There is borne in upon us, as we read, the realization of a wild and peculiar civilization; we get a breath of poetry keen and strange, like the shrilling of the bag-pipes across the water. Again, in the speeding of the fiery cross there is a primitive depth of poetry which carries with it a sense of "old, unhappy, far-off things;" it appeals to latent memories in us,

which have been handed down from an ancestral past. There is nothing in either *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* or *Marmion* to compare for natural dramatic force with the situation in *The Lady of the Lake* when Roderick Dhu whistles for his clansmen to appear, and the astonished Fitz-James sees the lonely mountain side suddenly bristle with tartans and spears; and the fight which follows at the ford is a real fight, in a sense not at all to be applied to the tournaments and other conventional encounters of the earlier poems. Even where Scott still clung to supernatural devices to help along his story, he handles them with much greater subtlety than he had done in his earlier efforts. The dropping of Douglas's sword from its scabbard when his disguised enemy enters the room, arouses the imagination without burdening it. It has the same imaginative advantage over such an episode as that in the *Lay*, where the ghost of the wizard comes to bear off the goblin page, as suggestion always has over explicit statement. This gain in subtlety of treatment will be made still more apparent by comparing with any supernatural episode of the *Lay*, the account in *The Lady of the Lake* of the unearthly parentage of Brian the Hermit.

The gain in style is less perceptible. Scott was never a great stylist; he struck out at the very first a nervous, hurrying metre, and a strong though rather commonplace diction, upon which

he never substantially improved. Abundant action, rapid transitions, stirring descriptions, common sentiments and ordinary language heightened by a dash of pomp and novelty, above all a pervading animation, spirit, intrepidity,—these are the constant elements of Scott's success, present here in their accustomed measure. In the broader sense of style, however, where the word is understood to include all the processes leading to a given poetical effect, *The Lady of the Lake* has some advantage, even over *Marmion*. It contains nothing, to be sure, so fine or so typical of Scott's peculiar power, as the account of the Battle of Flodden in *Marmion;* the minstrel's recital of the battle of Beal' an Duine does not abide the comparison. The quieter parts of *The Lady of the Lake*, moreover, are sometimes disfigured by a sentimentality and "prettiness" happily unfrequent with Scott. But the description of the approach of Roderick Dhu's war-boats, already mentioned, the superb landscape delineation in the fifth canto, and the beautiful twilight ending of canto third, can well stand as prime types of Scott's stylistic power.

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

CANTO FIRST

THE CHASE

Harp of the North! that mouldering long hast hung
On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
Till envious ivy did around thee cling,
Muffling with verdant ringlet every string,—
O Minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?
Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmuring,
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the proud.

At each according pause, was heard aloud
Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bow'd;
For still the burden of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's matchless eye.

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! though scarce my skill command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touch'd in vain.
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

I

The stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade;
But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouth'd bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II

As Chief, who hears his warder call,
"To arms! the foemen storm the wall,"
The antler'd monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III

Yell'd on the view the opening pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern, paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.

Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cower'd the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Return'd from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

IV

Less loud the sounds of silvan war
Disturb'd the heights of Uam-Var,
And roused the cavern, where, 'tis told,
A giant made his den of old;
For ere that steep ascent was won,
High in his pathway hung the sun,
And many a gallant, stay'd perforce,
Was fain to breathe his faltering horse,
And of the trackers of the deer,
Scarce half the lessening pack was near;
So shrewdly on the mountain side,
Had the bold burst their mettle tried.

V

The noble stag was pausing now
Upon the mountain's southern brow,
Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith.

With anxious eye he wander'd o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And ponder'd refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copsewood grey,
That waved and wept on Loch-Achray,
And mingled with the pine-trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Benvenue.
Fresh vigour with the hope return'd,
With flying foot the heath he spurn'd,
Held westward with unwearied race,
And left behind the panting chase.

VI

'Twere long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambusmore:
What reins were tighten'd in despair,
When rose Benledi's ridge in air;
Who flagg'd upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunn'd to stem the flooded Teith,—
For twice that day, from shore to shore,
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er.
Few were the stragglers, following far,
That reach'd the lake of Vennachar;
And when the Brigg of Turk was won,
The headmost horseman rode alone.

VII

Alone, but with unbated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel;

For jaded now, and spent with toil,
Emboss'd with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strain'd full in view.
Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatch'd for courage, breath, and speed,
Fast on his flying traces came,
And all but won that desperate game;
For, scarce a spear's length from his haunch,
Vindictive toil'd the bloodhounds stanch;
Nor nearer might the dogs attain,
Nor farther might the quarry strain.
Thus up the margin of the lake,
Between the precipice and brake,
O'er stock and rock their race they take.

VIII

The Hunter mark'd that mountain high,
The lone lake's western boundary,
And deem'd the stag must turn to bay,
Where that huge rampart barr'd the way;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes;
For the death-wound and death-halloo,
Muster'd his breath, his whinyard drew;—
But thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunn'd the shock,

And turn'd him from the opposing rock;
Then, dashing down a darksome glen,
Soon lost to hound and Hunter's ken,
In the deep Trosachs' wildest nook
His solitary refuge took.
There, while close couch'd, the thicket shed
Cold dews and wild-flowers on his head,
He heard the baffled dogs in vain
Rave through the hollow pass amain,
Chiding the rocks that yell'd again.

IX

Close on the hounds the Hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanish'd game;
But, stumbling in the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labours o'er,
Stretch'd his stiff limbs, to rise no more;
Then, touch'd with pity and remorse,
He sorrow'd o'er the expiring horse.
"I little thought, when first thy rein
I slack'd upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed!
Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That costs thy life, my gallant grey!"

X

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.
Back limp'd, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they press'd,
With drooping tail and humbled crest;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolong'd the swelling bugle-note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answered with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast,
Till echo seem'd an answering blast;
And on the Hunter hied his way,
To join some comrades of the day;
Yet often paused, so strange the road,
So wondrous were the scenes it show'd.

XI

The western waves of ebbing day
Roll'd o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle;

Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seem'd fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lack'd they many a banner fair;
For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dewdrops sheen,
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

XII

Boon nature scatter'd, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Fox-glove and night-shade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,

Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And, higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
His bows athwart the narrow'd sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glist'ning streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

XIII

Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
A narrow inlet, still and deep,
Affording scarce such breadth of brim
As served the wild duck's brood to swim.
Lost for a space, through thickets veering,
But broader when again appearing,
Tall rocks and tufted knolls their face
Could on the dark-blue mirror trace;
And farther as the Hunter stray'd,
Still broader sweep its channels made.

The shaggy mounds no longer stood,
Emerging from entangled wood,
But, wave-encircled, seem'd to float,
Like castle girdled with its moat;
Yet broader floods extending still
Divide them from their parent hill,
Till each, retiring, claims to be
An islet in an inland sea.

XIV

And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far projecting precipice.
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnish'd sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light,
And mountains, that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw

Crags, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
The fragments of an earlier world;
A wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed,
And, "What a scene were here," he cried,
"For princely pomp, or churchman's pride!
On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
On yonder meadow, far away,
The turrets of a cloister grey;
How blithely might the bugle-horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!
How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
Chime, when the groves were still and mute!
And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matin's distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell—
And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,

Should each bewilder'd stranger call
To friendly feast, and lighted hall.

XVI

"Blithe were it then to wander here!
But now,—beshrew yon nimble deer,—
Like that same hermit's, thin and spare,
The copse must give my evening fare;
Some mossy bank my couch must be,
Some rustling oak my canopy.
Yet pass we that; the war and chase
Give little choice of resting-place;—
A summer night, in greenwood spent,
Were but to-morrow's merriment:
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better miss'd than found;
To meet with Highland plunderers here,
Were worse than loss of steed or deer.—
I am alone;—my bugle-strain
May call some straggler of the train;
Or, fall the worst that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried."

XVII

But scarce again his horn he wound,
When lo! forth starting at the sound,
From underneath an aged oak,
That slanted from the islet rock,

A damsel guider of its way,
A little skiff shot to the bay,
That round the promontory steep
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,
Eddying, in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow-twig to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touch'd this silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,
And stood conceal'd amid the brake,
To view this Lady of the Lake.
The maiden paused, as if again
She thought to catch the distant strain.
With head up-raised, and look intent,
And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art,
In listening mood, she seem'd to stand,
The guardian Naiad of the strand.

XVIII

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,

Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow:
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had train'd her pace,—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dash'd the dew;
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread:
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue,—
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The listener held his breath to hear!

XIX

A chieftain's daughter seem'd the maid;
Her satin snood, her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch such birth betray'd.
And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing;
And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
Mantled a plaid with modest care,
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.
Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true,

Than every free-born glance confess'd
The guileless movements of her breast;
Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claim'd a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion pour'd a prayer,
Or tale of injury call'd forth
The indignant spirit of the North.
One only passion unreveal'd,
With maiden pride the maid conceal'd,
Yet not less purely felt the flame;—
O! need I tell that passion's name!

XX

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne:—
"Father!" she cried; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
A while she paused, no answer came,—
"Malcolm, was thine the blast?" the name
Less resolutely utter'd fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
"A stranger I," the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid, alarm'd, with hasty oar,
Push'd her light shallop from the shore,
And when a space was gain'd between,
Closer she drew her bosom's screen;

(So forth the startled swan would swing,
So turn to prune his ruffled wing.)
Then safe, though flutter'd and amazed,
She paused, and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

XXI

On his bold visage middle age
Had slightly press'd its signet sage,
Yet had not quench'd the open truth
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
Of hasty love, or headlong ire.
His limbs were cast in manly mould,
For hardy sports or contest bold;
And though in peaceful garb array'd,
And weaponless, except his blade,
His stately mien as well implied
A high-born heart, a martial pride,
As if a Baron's crest he wore,
And sheathed in armour trode the shore.
Slighting the petty need he show'd,
He told of his benighted road;
His ready speech flow'd fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy;
Yet seem'd that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII

A while the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at length replied,
That Highland halls were open still
To wilder'd wanderers of the hill.
"Nor think you unexpected come
To yon lone isle, our desert home;
Before the heath had lost the dew,
This morn, a couch was pull'd for you;
On yonder mountain's purple head
Have ptarmigan and heath-cock bled,
And our broad nets have swept the mere,
To furnish forth your evening cheer."—
"Now, by the rood, my lovely maid,
Your courtesy has err'd," he said;
"No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer, here by fortune tost,
My way, my friends, my courser lost,
I ne'er before, believe me, fair,
Have ever drawn your mountain air,
Till on this lake's romantic strand,
I found a fay in fairy land!"—

XXIII

"I well believe," the maid replied,
As her light skiff approach'd the side,—
"I well believe, that ne'er before
Your foot has trod Loch Katrine's shore;

But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-bane foretold your plight,—
A grey-haired sire, whose eye intent
Was on the vision'd future bent.
He saw your steed, a dappled grey,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
Painted exact your form and mien,
Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,
That tassell'd horn so gaily gilt,
That falchion's crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be,
To grace a guest of fair degree;
But light I held his prophecy,
And deem'd it was my father's horn,
Whose echoes o'er the lake were borne."

XXIV

The stranger smiled:—"Since to your home
A destined errant knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doom'd, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I'll lightly front each high emprise,
For one kind glance of those bright eyes.
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid, with smile suppress'd and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try;

For seldom sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasped an oar:
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.
Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The dark'ning mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV

The stranger view'd the shore around;
'Twas all so close with copsewood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain-maiden show'd
A clambering unsuspected road,
That winded through the tangled screen,
And open'd on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibres swept the ground.
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower.

XXVI

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials, as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.

Lopp'd of their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees, overhead,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And wither'd heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne,
Of mountain fir with bark unshorn,
Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
The ivy and Idæan vine,
The clematis, the favour'd flower
Which boasts the name of virgin-bower,
And every hardy plant could bear
Loch Katrine's keen and searching air.
An instant in this porch she staid,
And gaily to the stranger said,
"On heaven and on thy lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII

"My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
My gentle guide, in following thee."—
He cross'd the threshold—and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.

To his bold brow his spirit rush'd,
But soon for vain alarm he blush'd,
When on the floor he saw display'd,
Cause of the din, a naked blade
Dropp'd from the sheath, that careless flung
Upon a stag's huge antlers swung;
For all around, the walls to grace,
Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
A target there, a bugle here,
A battle-axe, a hunting spear,
And broadswords, bows, and arrows store,
With the tusk'd trophies of the boar.
Here grins the wolf as when he died,
And there the wild-cat's brindled hide
The frontlet of the elk adorns,
Or mantles o'er the bison's horns;
Pennons and flags defaced and stain'd,
That blackening streaks of blood retain'd,
And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
With otter's fur and seal's unite,
In rude and uncouth tapestry all,
To garnish forth the silvan hall.

XXVIII

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
And next the fallen weapon raised:—
Few were the arms whose sinewy strength,
Sufficed to stretch it forth at length.

And as the brand he poised and sway'd,
"I never knew but one," he said,
"Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
A blade like this in battle-field."
She sigh'd, then smiled and took the word;
"You see the guardian champion's sword:
As light it trembles in his hand,
As in my grasp a hazel wand;
My sire's tall form might grace the part
Of Ferragus, or Ascabart;
But in the absent giant's hold
Are women now, and menials old."

XXIX

The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court,
To whom, though more than kindred knew,
Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid,
That hospitality could claim,
Though all unask'd his birth and name.
Such then the reverence to a guest,
That fellest foe might join the feast,
And from his deadliest foeman's door
Unquestion'd turn, the banquet o'er.

At length his rank the stranger names,
"The Knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James;
Lord of a barren heritage,
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords had held with toil;
His sire had fallen in such turmoil,
And he, God wot, was forced to stand
Oft for his right with blade in hand.
This morning, with Lord Moray's train
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here."

XXX

Fain would the Knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire.
Well show'd the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks display'd
The simple grace of silvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Show'd she was come of gentle race.
'Twere strange in ruder rank to find
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.
Each hint the Knight of Snowdoun gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;
Or Ellen, innocently gay,
Turn'd all inquiry light away:—

"Weird women we! by dale and down
We dwell, afar from tower and town.
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
On wandering knights our spells we cast;
While viewless minstrels touch the string,
'Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing."
She sung, and still a harp unseen
Fill'd up the symphony between.

XXXI

SONG

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking:
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more:
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

"No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.

Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
  At the day-break from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
  Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans or squadrons stamping."

XXXII

She paused—then, blushing, led the lay
To grace the stranger of the day.
Her mellow notes awhile prolong
The cadence of the flowing song,
Till to her lips in measured frame
The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

SONG—(*Continued*)

"Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
  While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
  Bugles here shall sound reveillé.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
  Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen,
  How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
Think not of the rising sun,

For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveillé."

XXXIII

The hall was clear'd—the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread,
Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
And dream'd their forest sports again.
But vainly did the heath-flower shed
Its moorland fragrance round his head;
Not Ellen's spell had lull'd to rest
The fever of his troubled breast.
In broken dreams the image rose
Of varied perils, pains, and woes:
His steed now flounders in the brake,
Now sinks his barge upon the lake;
Now leader of a broken host,
His standard falls, his honour's lost.
Then,—from my couch may heavenly might
Chase that worst phantom of the night!—
Again return'd the scenes of youth,
Of confident undoubting truth;
Again his soul he interchanged
With friends whose hearts were long estranged.
They come, in dim procession led,
The cold, the faithless, and the dead;
As warm each hand, each brow as gay,
As if they parted yesterday.
And doubt distracts him at the view—
O were his senses false or true?

Dream'd he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now?

XXXIV

At length, with Ellen in a grove
He seem'd to walk, and speak of love;
She listen'd with a blush and sigh,
His suit was warm, his hopes were high.
He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet met his grasp:
The phantom's sex was changed and gone,
Upon its head a helmet shone;
Slowly enlarged to giant size,
With darken'd cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore.—
He woke, and, panting with affright,
Recall'd the vision of the night.
The hearth's decaying brands were red,
And deep and dusky lustre shed,
Half showing, half concealing, all
The uncouth trophies of the hall.
Mid those the stranger fixed his eye,
Where that huge falchion hung on high,
And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rush'd, chasing countless thoughts along,
Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

XXXV

The wild-rose, eglantine, and broom,
Wasted around their rich perfume:
The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm,
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Play'd on the water's still expanse,—
Wild were the heart whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!
He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
While thus he communed with his breast:—
"Why is it, at each turn I trace
Some memory of that exiled race?
Can I not mountain-maiden spy,
But she must bear the Douglas eye?
Can I not view a Highland brand,
But it must match the Douglas hand?
Can I not frame a fever'd dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme?
I'll dream no more—by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resign'd.
My midnight orisons said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more."
His midnight orisons he told,
A prayer with every bead of gold,
Consign'd to heaven his cares and woes,
And sunk in undisturb'd repose;
Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
And morning dawn'd on Benvenue.

CANTO SECOND

THE ISLAND

I

At morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay,
All Nature's children feel the matin spring
Of life reviving, with reviving day;
And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
Wafting the stranger on his way again,
Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel grey,
And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
Mix'd with the sounding harp, O white-hair'd Allan-bane!

II

SONG

"Not faster yonder rowers' might
Flings from their oars the spray,
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light,
Melts in the lake away,
Than men from memory erase
The benefits of former days;

Then, stranger, go! good speed the while,
Nor think again of the lonely isle.

"High place to thee in royal court,
High place in battle line,
Good hawk and hound for silvan sport,
Where beauty sees the brave resort,
The honour'd meed be thine!
True be thy sword, thy friend sincere.
Thy lady constant, kind, and dear,
And lost in love, and friendship's smile
Be memory of the lonely isle.

III

SONG—(*Continued*)

"But if beneath yon southern sky
A plaided stranger roam,
Whose drooping crest and stifled sigh,
And sunken cheek and heavy eye,
Pine for his Highland home;
Then, warrior, then be thine to show
The care that soothes a wanderer's woe;
Remember then thy hap ere while,
A stranger in the lonely isle.

"Or if on life's uncertain main
Mishap shall mar thy sail;
If faithful, wise, and brave in vain,
Woe, want, and exile thou sustain
Beneath the fickle gale;

Waste not a sigh on fortune changed,
On thankless courts, or friends estranged,
But come where kindred worth shall smile,
To greet thee in the lonely isle."

IV

As died the sounds upon the tide,
The shallop reach'd the mainland side,
And ere his onward way he took,
The stranger cast a lingering look,
Where easily his eye might reach
The Harper on the islet beach,
Reclined against a blighted tree,
As wasted, grey, and worn as he.
To minstrel meditation given,
His reverend brow was raised to heaven,
As from the rising sun to claim
A sparkle of inspiring flame.
His hand, reclined upon the wire,
Seem'd watching the awakening fire;
So still he sate, as those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate;
So still, as if no breeze might dare
To lift one lock of hoary hair;
So still, as life itself were fled,
In the last sound his harp had sped.

V

Upon a rock with lichens wild,
Beside him Ellen sate and smiled.—

Smiled she to see the stately drake
Lead forth his fleet upon the lake,
While her vex'd spaniel, from the beach,
Bay'd at the prize beyond his reach?
Yet tell me, then, the maid who knows,
Why deepen'd on her cheek the rose?—
Forgive, forgive, Fidelity!
Perchance the maiden smiled to see
Yon parting lingerer wave adieu,
And stop and turn to wave anew;
And, lovely ladies, ere your ire
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Show me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquest of her eye!

VI

While yet he loiter'd on the spot,
It seem'd as Ellen mark'd him not;
But when he turn'd him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made;
And after, oft the knight would say,
That not when prize of festal day
Was dealt him by the brightest fair,
Who e'er wore jewel in her hair,
So highly did his bosom swell,
As at that simple mute farewell.
Now with a trusty mountain-guide,
And his dark stag-hounds by his side,

He parts—the maid, unconscious still,
Watch'd him wind slowly round the hill;
But when his stately form was hid,
The guardian in her bosom chid—
"Thy Malcolm! vain and selfish maid!"
'Twas thus upbraiding conscience said,—
"Not so had Malcolm idly hung
On the smooth phrase of southern tongue;
Not so had Malcolm strain'd his eye
Another step than thine to spy.—
Wake, Allan-bane," aloud she cried,
To the old Minstrel by her side,—
"Arouse thee from thy moody dream!
I'll give thy harp heroic theme,
And warm thee with a noble name;
Pour forth the glory of the Græme!"
Scarce from her lip the word had rush'd,
When deep the conscious maiden blush'd;
For of his clan, in hall and bower,
Young Malcolm Græme was held the flower.

VII

The Minstrel waked his harp—three times
Arose the well-known martial chimes,
And thrice their high heroic pride
In melancholy murmurs died.
"Vainly thou bid'st, O noble maid,"
Clasping his wither'd hands, he said,

"Vainly thou bid'st me wake the strain,
Though all unwont to bid in vain.
Alas! than mine a mightier hand
Has tuned my harp, my strings has spann'd!
I touch the chords of joy, but low
And mournful answer notes of woe;
And the proud march, which victors tread,
Sinks in the wailing for the dead.
O well for me, if mine alone
That dirge's deep prophetic tone!
If, as my tuneful fathers said,
This harp, which erst Saint Modan sway'd,
Can thus its master's fate foretell,
Then welcome be the minstrel's knell!

VIII

"But ah! dear lady, thus it sigh'd
The eve thy sainted mother died;
And such the sounds which, while I strove
To wake a lay of war or love,
Came marring all the festal mirth,
Appalling me who gave them birth,
And, disobedient to my call,
Wail'd loud through Bothwell's banner'd hall,
Ere Douglasses, to ruin driven,
Were exiled from their native heaven.—
Oh! if yet worse mishap and woe,
My master's house must undergo,

Or aught but weal to Ellen fair,
Brood in these accents of despair,
No future bard, sad Harp! shall fling
Triumph or rapture from thy string;
One short, one final strain shall flow,
Fraught with unutterable woe,
Then shiver'd shall thy fragments lie,
Thy master cast him down and die!"

IX

Soothing she answer'd him— "Assuage,
Mine honour'd friend, the fears of age;
All melodies to thee are known,
That harp has rung, or pipe has blown,
In Lowland vale or Highland glen,
From Tweed to Spey—what marvel, then,
At times, unbidden notes should rise,
Confusedly bound in memory's ties,
Entangling, as they rush along,
The war-march with the funeral song?—
Small ground is now for boding fear;
Obscure, but safe, we rest us here.
My sire, in native virtue great,
Resigning lordship, lands, and state,
Not then to fortune more resign'd,
Than yonder oak might give the wind;
The graceful foliage storms may reave,
The noble stem they cannot grieve.

For me,"—she stoop'd, and, looking round,
Pluck'd a blue hare-bell from the ground,—
"For me, whose memory scarce conveys
An image of more splendid days,
This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well my simple emblem be;
It drinks heaven's dew as blithe as rose
That in the king's own garden grows;
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a bard, is bound to swear
He ne'er saw coronet so fair."
Then playfully the chaplet wild
She wreath'd in her dark locks, and smiled.

X

Her smile, her speech, with winning sway,
Wiled the old harper's mood away.
With such a look as hermits throw,
When angels stoop to soothe their woe,
He gazed, till fond regret and pride
Thrilled to a tear, then thus replied:
"Loveliest and best! thou little know'st
The rank, the honours, thou hast lost!
O might I live to see thee grace,
In Scotland's court, thy birth-right place,
To see my favourite's step advance,
The lightest in the courtly dance,
The cause of every gallant's sigh,
And leading star of every eve,

And theme of every minstrel's art,
The Lady of the Bleeding Heart!"—

XI

"Fair dreams are these," the maiden cried,
(Light was her accent, yet she sigh'd;)
"Yet is this mossy rock to me
Worth splendid chair and canopy;
Nor would my footsteps spring more gay
In courtly dance than blithe strathspey,
Nor half so pleased mine ear incline
To royal minstrel's lay as thine.
And then for suitors proud and high,
To bend before my conquering eye,—
Thou, flattering bard! thyself wilt say,
That grim Sir Roderick owns its sway.
The Saxon scourge, Clan-Alpine's pride,
The terror of Loch-Lomond's side,
Would, at my suit, thou know'st, delay
A Lennox foray—for a day."—

XII

The ancient bard his glee repress'd:
"Ill hast thou chosen theme for jest!
For who, through all this western wild,
Named Black Sir Roderick e'er, and smiled!
In Holy-Rood a knight he slew;
I saw, when back the dirk he drew,
Courtiers give place before the stride
Of the undaunted homicide;

And since, though outlaw'd, hath his hand
Full sternly kept his mountain land.
Who else dared give—ah! woe the day,
That I such hated truth should say—
The Douglas, like a stricken deer,
Disown'd by every noble peer,
Even the rude refuge we have here?
Alas, this wild marauding Chief
Alone might hazard our relief,
And now thy maiden charms expand,
Looks for his guerdon in thy hand;
Full soon may dispensation sought,
To back his suit, from Rome be brought.
Then, though an exile on the hill,
Thy father, as the Douglas, still
Be held in reverence and fear;
And though to Roderick thou'rt so dear,
That thou might'st guide with silken thread,
Slave of thy will, this chieftain dread;
Yet, O loved maid, thy mirth refrain!
Thy hand is on a lion's mane."—

XIII

"Minstrel," the maid replied, and high
Her father's soul glanced from her eye,
"My debts to Roderick's house I know:
All that a mother could bestow,
To Lady Margaret's care I owe,
Since first an orphan in the wild

She sorrow'd o'er her sister's child;
To her brave chieftain son, from ire
Of Scotland's king who shrouds my sire.
A deeper, holier debt is owed;
And, could I pay it with my blood,
Allan! Sir Roderick should command
My blood, my life,—but not my hand.
Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell
A votaress in Maronnan's cell;
Rather through realms beyond the sea,
Seeking the world's cold charity,
Where ne'er was spoke a Scottish word,
And ne'er the name of Douglas heard,
An outcast pilgrim will she rove,
Than wed the man she cannot love.

XIV

"Thou shakest, good friend, thy tresses grey—
That pleading look, what can it say
But what I own?—I grant him brave,
But wild as Bracklinn's thundering wave;
And generous—save vindictive mood,
Or jealous transport, chafe his blood:
I grant him true to friendly band,
As his claymore is to his hand;
But O! that very blade of steel
More mercy for a foe would feel:
I grant him liberal, to fling
Among his clan the wealth they bring,

When back by lake and glen they wind,
And in the Lowland leave behind,
Where once some pleasant hamlet stood,
A mass of ashes slaked with blood.
The hand that for my father fought,
I honour, as his daughter ought;
But can I clasp it reeking red,
From peasants slaughter'd in their shed?
No! wildly while his virtues gleam,
They make his passions darker seem,
And flash along his spirit high,
Like lightning o'er the midnight sky.
While yet a child,—and children know,
Instinctive taught, the friend and foe,—
I shudder'd at his brow of gloom,
His shadowy plaid, and sable plume;
A maiden grown, I ill could bear
His haughty mien and lordly air:
But, if thou join'st a suitor's claim,
In serious mood, to Roderick's name,
I thrill with anguish! or, if e'er
A Douglas knew the word, with fear.
To change such odious theme were best,—
What think'st thou of our stranger guest?"—

XV

"What think I of him?—woe the while
That brought such wanderer to our isle!
Thy father's battle-brand, of yore
For Tine-man forged by fairy lore.

What time he leagued, no longer foes,
His Border spears with Hotspur's bows,
Did, self-unscabbarded, foreshow
The footstep of a secret foe.
If courtly spy hath harbour'd here,
What may we for the Douglas fear?
What for this island, deem'd of old
Clan-Alpine's last and surest hold?
If neither spy nor foe, I pray
What yet may jealous Roderick say?
—Nay, wave not thy disdainful head,
Bethink thee of the discord dread,
That kindled when at Beltane game
Thou ledst the dance with Malcolm Græme;
Still, though thy sire the peace renew'd,
Smoulders in Roderick's breast the feud;
Beware!—But hark, what sounds are these?
My dull ears catch no faltering breeze,
No weeping birch, nor aspens wake,
Nor breath is dimpling in the lake,
Still is the canna's hoary beard,
Yet, by my minstrel faith, I heard—
And hark again! some pipe of war
Sends the bold pibroch from afar."

XVI

Far up the lengthen'd lake were spied
Four darkening specks upon the tide,
That, slow enlarging on the view,
Four mann'd and masted barges grew,

And, bearing downwards from Glengyle,
Steer'd full upon the lonely isle;
The point of Brianchoil they pass'd,
And, to the windward as they cast,
Against the sun they gave to shine
The bold Sir Roderick's banner'd Pine.
Nearer and nearer as they bear,
Spears, pikes, and axes flash in air.
Now might you see the tartans brave,
And plaids and plumage dance and wave.
Now see the bonnets sink and rise,
As his tough oar the rower plies;
See, flashing at each sturdy stroke,
The wave ascending into smoke;
See the proud pipers on the bow,
And mark the gaudy streamers flow
From their loud chanters down, and sweep
The furrow'd bosom of the deep,
As, rushing through the lake amain,
They plied the ancient Highland strain.

XVII

Ever, as on they bore, more loud
And louder rung the pibroch proud.
At first the sound, by distance tame,
Mellow'd along the waters came,
And, lingering long by cape and bay,
Wail'd every harsher note away,

Then bursting bolder on the ear,
The clan's shrill Gathering they could hear;
Those thrilling sounds, that call the might
Of Old Clan-Alpine to the fight.
Thick beat the rapid notes, as when
The mustering hundreds shake the glen,
And hurrying at the signal dread,
The batter'd earth returns their tread.
Then prelude light, of livelier tone,
Express'd their merry marching on,
Ere peal of closing battle rose,
With mingled outcry, shrieks, and blows;
And mimic din of stroke and ward,
As broad sword upon target jarr'd;
And groaning pause, ere yet again,
Condensed, the battle yell'd amain;
The rapid charge, the rallying shout,
Retreat borne headlong into rout,
And bursts of triumph, to declare
Clan-Alpine's conquest—all were there.
Nor ended thus the strain; but slow
Sunk in a moan prolong'd and low,
And changed the conquering clarion swell,
For wild lament o'er those that fell.

XVIII

The war-pipes ceased; but lake and hill
Were busy with their echoes still;
And, when they slept, a vocal strain
Bade their hoarse chorus wake again,

While loud a hundred clansmen raise
Their voices in their Chieftain's praise.
Each boatman, bending to his oar,
With measured sweep the burden bore,
In such wild cadence, as the breeze
Makes through December's leafless trees.
The chorus first could Allan know,
"Roderick Vich Alpine, ho! iro!"
And near, and nearer as they row'd,
Distinct the martial ditty flow'd.

XIX

BOAT SONG

Hail to the Chief who in triumph advances!
Honour'd and bless'd be the ever-green Pine!
Long may the tree, in his banner that glances,
Flourish, the shelter and grace of our line!
Heaven send it happy dew,
Earth lend it sap anew,
Gayly to bourgeon, and broadly to grow,
While every Highland glen
Sends our shout back agen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Ours is no sapling, chance-sown by the fountain,
Blooming at Beltane, in winter to fade;
When the whirlwind has stripp'd every leaf on the mountain,
The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.

Moor'd in the rifted rock,
Proof to the tempest's shock,
Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow;
Menteith and Breadalbane, then,
Echo his praise agen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu ho! ieroe!"

XX

Proudly our pibroch has thrill'd in Glen Fruin,
And Bannochar's groans to our slogan replied;
Glen Luss and Ross-dhu, they are smoking in ruin,
And the best of Loch-Lomond lie dead on her side.
Widow and Saxon maid
Long shall lament our raid,
Think of Clan-Alpine with fear and with woe;
Lennox and Leven-glen
Shake when they hear agen
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Highlands!
Stretch to your oars, for the ever-green Pine!
O, that the rose-bud that graces yon islands,
Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine!
O that some seedling gem,
Worthy such noble stem,
Honour'd and bless'd in their shadow might grow:

Loud should Clan-Alpine then
Ring from her deepmost glen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XXI

With all her joyful female band,
Had Lady Margaret sought the strand.
Loose on the breeze their tresses flew,
And high their snowy arms they threw,
As echoing back with shrill acclaim,
And chorus wild, the Chieftain's name;
While, prompt to please, with mother's art,
The darling passion of his heart,
The Dame called Ellen to the strand,
To greet her kinsman ere he land:
"Come, loiterer, come! a Douglas thou,
And shun to wreathe a victor's brow?"—
Reluctantly and slow, the maid
The unwelcome summoning obey'd,
And, when a distant bugle rung,
In the mid-path aside she sprung:—
"List, Allan-bane! From mainland cast
I hear my father's signal blast.
Be ours," she cried, "the skiff to guide,
And waft him from the mountain side."
Then, like a sunbeam, swift and bright,
She darted to her shallop light,
And, eagerly while Roderick scann'd,
For her dear form, his mother's band,

The islet far behind her lay,
And she had landed in the bay.

XXII

Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than heaven:
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dross refined and clear,
A tear so limpid and so meek,
It would not stain an angel's cheek,
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a duteous daughter's head!
And as the Douglas to his breast
His darling Ellen closely press'd,
Such holy drops her tresses steep'd,
Though 'twas an hero's eye that weep'd.
Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue
Her filial welcomes crowded hung,
Mark'd she, that fear (affection's proof)
Still held a graceful youth aloof;
No! not till Douglas named his name,
Although the youth was Malcolm Graeme.

XXIII

Allan, with wistful look the while,
Mark'd Roderick landing on the isle;
His master piteously he eyed,
Then gazed upon the Chieftain's pride,
Then dash'd, with hasty hand, away
From his dimm'd eye the gathering spray;

And Douglas, as his hand he laid
On Malcolm's shoulder, kindly said,
"Canst thou, young friend, no meaning spy
In my poor follower's glistening eye?
I'll tell thee:—he recalls the day,
When in my praise he led the lay
O'er the arch'd gate of Bothwell proud,
While many a minstrel answer'd loud,
When Percy's Norman pennon, won
In bloody field, before me shone,
And twice ten knights, the least a name
As mighty as yon Chief may claim,
Gracing my pomp, behind me came.
Yet trust me, Malcolm, not so proud
Was I of all that marshall'd crowd,
Though the waned crescent own'd my might,
And in my train troop'd lord and knight,
Though Blantyre hymn'd her holiest lays,
And Bothwell's bards flung back my praise,
As when this old man's silent tear,
And this poor maid's affection dear,
A welcome give more kind and true,
Than aught my better fortunes knew.
Forgive, my friend, a father's boast,
O! it out-beggars all I lost!"

XXIV

Delightful praise!—like summer rose,
That brighter in the dew-drop glows,

The bashful maiden's cheek appear'd,
For Douglas spoke, and Malcolm heard.
The flush of shame-faced joy to hide,
The hounds, the hawk, her cares divide;
The loved caresses of the maid
The dogs with crouch and whimper paid;
And, at her whistle, on her hand
The falcon took her favourite stand,
Closed his dark wing, relax'd his eye,
Nor, though unhooded, sought to fly.
And, trust, while in such guise she stood,
Like fabled Goddess of the wood,
That if a father's partial thought
O'erweigh'd her worth, and beauty aught,
Well might the lover's judgment fail
To balance with a juster scale;
For with each secret glance he stole,
The fond enthusiast sent his soul.

XXV

Of stature tall, and slender frame,
But firmly knit, was Malcolm Græme.
The belted plaid and tartan hose
Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose;
His flaxen hair, of sunny hue,
Curl'd closely round his bonnet blue.
Train'd to the chase, his eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy:

Each pass, by mountain, lake, and heath,
He knew, through Lennox and Menteith;
Vain was the bound of dark-brown doe,
When Malcolm bent his sounding bow,
And scarce that doe, though wing'd with fear,
Outstripp'd in speed the mountaineer:
Right up Ben-Lomond could he press,
And not a sob his toil confess.
His form accorded with a mind
Lively and ardent, frank and kind;
A blither heart, till Ellen came,
Did never love nor sorrow tame;
It danced as lightsome in his breast,
As play'd the feather on his crest.
Yet friends, who nearest knew the youth,
His scorn of wrong, his zeal for truth,
And bards, who saw his features bold,
When kindled by the tales of old,
Said, were that youth to manhood grown,
Not long should Roderick Dhu's renown
Be foremost voiced by mountain fame,
But quail to that of Malcolm Græme.

XXVI

Now back they wend their watery way,
And, "O my sire!" did Ellen say,
"Why urge thy chase so far astray?
And why so late return'd? And why"—
The rest was in her speaking eye.

"My child, the chase I follow far,
'Tis mimicry of noble war;
And with that gallant pastime reft
Were all of Douglas I have left.
I met young Malcolm as I stray'd
Far eastward, in Glenfinlas' shade,
Nor stray'd I safe; for, all around,
Hunters and horsemen scour'd the ground.
This youth, though still a royal ward,
Risk'd life and land to be my guard,
And through the passes of the wood
Guided my steps, not unpursued;
And Roderick shall his welcome make,
Despite old spleen, for Douglas' sake.
Then must he seek Strath-Endrick glen,
Nor peril aught for me agen."

XXVII

Sir Roderick, who to meet them came,
Redden'd at sight of Malcolm Græme,
Yet, not in action, word, or eye,
Fail'd aught in hospitality.
In talk and sport they whiled away
The morning of that summer day;
But at high noon a courier light
Held secret parley with the knight,
Whose moody aspect soon declared,
That evil were the news he heard.
Deep thought seem'd toiling in his head;

Yet was the evening banquet made,
Ere he assembled round the flame,
His mother, Douglas, and the Græme,
And Ellen, too; then cast around
His eyes, then fix'd them on the ground,
As studying phrase that might avail
Best to convey unpleasant tale.
Long with his dagger's hilt he play'd,
Then raised his haughty brow, and said:—

XXVIII

"Short be my speech;—nor time affords,
Nor my plain temper, glozing words.
Kinsman and father,—if such name
Douglas vouchsafe to Roderick's claim;
Mine honour'd mother:—Ellen—why,
My cousin, turn away thine eye?—
And Græme; in whom I hope to know
Full soon a noble friend or foe,
When age shall give thee thy command,
And leading in thy native land,—
List all!—The King's vindictive pride
Boasts to have tamed the Border-side,
Where chiefs, with hound and hawk who came
To share their monarch's silvan game,
Themselves in bloody toils were snared;
And when the banquet they prepared,
And wide their loyal portals flung,
O'er their own gateway struggling hung.

Loud cries their blood from Meggat's mead,
From Yarrow braes, and banks of Tweed,
Where the lone streams of Ettrick glide,
And from the silver Teviot's side;
The dales, where martial clans did ride,
Are now one sheep-walk, waste and wide.
This tyrant of the Scottish throne,
So faithless, and so ruthless known,
Now hither comes; his end the same,
The same pretext of silvan game.
What grace for Highland Chiefs, judge ye
By fate of Border chivalry.
Yet more; amid Glenfinlas green,
Douglas, thy stately form was seen.
This by espial sure I know:
Your counsel in the streight I show."

XXIX

Ellen and Margaret fearfully
Sought comfort in each other's eye,
Then turn'd their ghastly look, each one,
This to her sire, that to her son.
The hasty colour went and came
In the bold cheek of Malcolm Græme;
But from his glance it well appear'd,
'Twas but for Ellen that he fear'd;
While, sorrowful, but undismay'd,
The Douglas thus his counsel said:—

"Brave Roderick, though the tempest roar,
It may but thunder and pass o'er;
Nor will I here remain an hour,
To draw the lightning on thy bower;
For well thou know'st, at this grey head
The royal bolt were fiercest sped.
For thee, who, at thy King's command,
Canst aid him with a gallant band,
Submission, homage, humbled pride,
Shall turn the Monarch's wrath aside.
Poor remnants of the Bleeding Heart,
Ellen and I will seek, apart,
The refuge of some forest cell,
There, like the hunted quarry, dwell,
Till on the mountain and the moor,
The stern pursuit be pass'd and o'er."—

XXX

"No, by mine honour," Roderick said,
"So help me Heaven, and my good blade!
No, never! Blasted be yon Pine,
My fathers' ancient crest and mine,
If from its shade in danger part
The lineage of the Bleeding Heart!
Hear my blunt speech: Grant me this maid
To wife, thy counsel to mine aid;
To Douglas, leagued with Roderick Dhu,
Will friends and allies flock enow;

Like cause of doubt, distrust, and grief,
Will bind to us each Western Chief.
When the loud pipes my bridal tell,
The Links of Forth shall hear the knell,
The guards shall start in Stirling's porch;
And, when I light the nuptial torch,
A thousand villages in flames
Shall scare the slumbers of King James!
—Nay, Ellen, blench not thus away,
And, mother, cease these signs, I pray;
I meant not all my heart might say.—
Small need of inroad, or of fight,
When the sage Douglas may unite
Each mountain clan in friendly band,
To guard the passes of their land,
Till the foil'd king, from pathless glen,
Shall bootless turn him home agen."

XXXI

There are who have, at midnight hour,
In slumber scaled a dizzy tower,
And, on the verge that beetled o'er
The ocean tide's incessant roar,
Dream'd calmly out their dangerous dream,
Till waken'd by the morning beam;
When, dazzled by the eastern glow,
Such startler cast his glance below,
And saw unmeasured depth around,
And heard unintermitted sound,

And thought the battled fence so frail,
It waved like cobweb in the gale;—
Amid his senses' giddy wheel,
Did he not desperate impulse feel,
Headlong to plunge himself below,
And meet the worst his fears foreshow?—
Thus, Ellen, dizzy and astound,
As sudden ruin yawn'd around,
By crossing terrors wildly toss'd,
Still for the Douglas fearing most,
Could scarce the desperate thought withstand,
To buy his safety with her hand.

XXXII

Such purpose dread could Malcolm spy
In Ellen's quivering lip and eye,
And eager rose to speak—but ere
His tongue could hurry forth his fear,
Had Douglas mark'd the hectic strife,
Where death seem'd combating with life;
For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
One instant rush'd the throbbing blood,
Then ebbing back, with sudden sway,
Left its domain as wan as clay.
"Roderick, enough! enough!" he cried.
"My daughter cannot be thy bride;
Not that the blush to wooer dear,
Nor paleness that of maiden fear.

It may not be—forgive her, Chief,
Nor hazard aught for our relief.
Against his sovereign, Douglas ne'er
Will level a rebellious spear.
'Twas I that taught his youthful hand
To rein a steed and wield a brand;
I see him yet, the princely boy!
Not Ellen more my pride and joy;
I love him still, despite my wrongs,
By hasty wrath, and slanderous tongues.
O seek the grace you well may find,
Without a cause to mine combined."

XXXIII

Twice through the hall the Chieftain strode;
The waving of his tartans broad,
And darken'd brow, where wounded pride
With ire and disappointment vied,
Seem'd, by the torch's gloomy light,
Like the ill Demon of the night,
Stooping his pinions' shadowy sway
Upon the knighted pilgrim's way:
But, unrequited Love! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenom'd smart,
And Roderick, with thine anguish stung,
At length the hand of Douglas wrung,
While eyes, that mock'd at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.

The death-pangs of long-cherish'd hope
Scarce in th t ample breast had scope,
But, struggling with his spirit proud,
Convulsive heaved its chequer'd shroud,
While every sob—so mute were all—
Was heard distinctly through the hall.
The son's despair, the mother's look,
Ill might the gentle Ellen brook;
She rose, and to her side there came,
To aid her parting steps, the Græme.

XXXIV

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—
As flashes flame through sable smoke,
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid:
"Back, beardless boy!" he sternly said,
"Back, minion! hold'st thou thus at naught
The lesson I so lately taught?
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delay'd."
Eager as greyhound on his game
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græme.
"Perish my name, if aught afford
Its Chieftain's safety save his sword!"

Thus as they strove, their desperate hand
Griped to the dagger or the brand,
And death had been—but Douglas rose,
And thrust between the struggling foes
His giant strength:—"Chieftains, forego!
I hold the first who strikes, my foe.—
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar!
What! is the Douglas fall'n so far,
His daughter's hand is doom'd the spoil
Of such dishonourable broil!"
Sullen and slowly they unclasp,
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,
And each upon his rival glared,
With foot advanced, and blade half bared.

XXXV

Ere yet the brands aloft were flung
Margaret on Roderick's mantle hung,
And Malcolm heard his Ellen's scream,
As falter'd through terrific dream.
Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword
And veil'd his wrath in scornful word:
"Rest safe till morning; pity t'were
Such cheek should feel the midnight air!
Then mayest thou to James Stuart tell,
Roderick will keep the lake and fell,
Nor lackey, with his freeborn clan,
The pageant pomp of earthly man.

More would he of Clan-Alpine know,
Thou canst our strength and passes show.—
Malise, what ho!"—his henchman came;
"Give our safe-conduct to the Græme."
Young Malcolm answer'd, calm and bold,
"Fear nothing for thy favourite hold;
The spot, an angel deigned to grace,
Is bless'd, though robbers haunt the place.
Thy churlish courtesy for those
Reserve, who fear to be thy foes.
As safe to me the mountain way
At midnight as in blaze of day,
Though with his boldest at his back
Even Roderick Dhu beset the track.—
Brave Douglas,—lovely Ellen,—nay,
Nought here of parting will I say.
Earth does not hold a lonesome glen,
So secret, but we meet agen.—
Chieftain! we too shall find an hour,"—
He said, and left the silvan bower.

XXXVI

Old Allan follow'd to the strand,
(Such was the Douglas's command,)
And anxious told, how, on the morn,
The stern Sir Roderick deep had sworn,
The Fiery Cross should circle o'er
Dale, glen, and valley, down, and moor.

Much were the peril to the Græme,
From those who to the signal came;
Far up the lake 'twere safest land,
Himself would row him to the strand.
He gave his counsel to the wind,
While Malcolm did, unheeding, bind,
Round dirk and pouch and broadsword roll'd,
His ample plaid in tighten'd fold,
And stripp'd his limbs to such array,
As best might suit the watery way,—

XXXVII

Then spoke abrupt: "Farewell to thee,
Pattern of old fidelity!"
The Minstrel's hand he kindly press'd,—
"O! could I point a place of rest!
My sovereign holds in ward my land,
My uncle leads my vassal band;
To tame his foes, his friends to aid,
Poor Malcolm has but heart and blade.
Yet, if there be one faithful Græme,
Who loves the chieftain of his name,
Not long shall honour'd Douglas dwell,
Like hunted stag in mountain cell;
Nor, ere yon pride-swoll'n robber dare,—
I may not give the rest to air!
Tell Roderick Dhu, I owed him nought,
Not the poor service of a boat,

To waft me to yon mountain-side."
Then plunged he in the flashing tide.
Bold o'er the flood his head he bore,
And stoutly steer'd him from the shore;
And Allan strain'd his anxious eye,
Far 'mid the lake his form to spy.
Darkening across each puny wave,
To which the moon her silver gave,
Fast as the cormorant could skim,
The swimmer plied each active limb;
Then landing in the moonlight dell,
Loud shouted of his weal to tell.
The Minstrel heard the far halloo,
And joyful from the shore withdrew.

CANTO THIRD

THE GATHERING

I

TIME rolls his ceaseless course. The race of yore,
  Who danced our infancy upon their knee,
And told our marvelling boyhood legends store,
  Of their strange ventures happ'd by land or sea,
How are they blotted from the things that be!
  How few, all weak and wither'd of their force,
Wait on the verge of dark eternity,
  Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning hoarse,
To sweep them from our sight! Time rolls his
    ceaseless course.

Yet live there still who can remember well,
  How, when a mountain chief his bugle blew,
Both field and forest, dingle, cliff, and dell,
  And solitary heath, the signal knew;
And fast the faithful clan around him drew,
  What time the warning note was keenly wound,
What time aloft their kindred banner flew,
  While clamorous war-pipes yell'd the gathering
    sound,
And while the Fiery Cross glanced, like a meteor,
    round.

II

The Summer dawn's reflected hue
To purple changed Loch Katrine blue;
Mildly and soft the western breeze
Just kiss'd the lake, just stirr'd the trees,
And the pleased lake, like maiden coy,
Trembled but dimpled not for joy;
The mountain-shadows on her breast
Were neither broken nor at rest;
In bright uncertainty they lie,
Like future joys to Fancy's eye.
The water-lily to the light
Her chalice rear'd of silver bright;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn,
Begemm'd with dew-drops, led her fawn;
The grey mist left the mountain side,
The torrent show'd its glistening pride;
Invisible in flecked sky,
The lark sent down her revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush;
In answer coo'd the cushat dove
Her notes of peace, and rest, and love.

III

No thought of peace, no thought of rest,
Assuaged the storm in Roderick's breast.
With sheathed broadsword in his hand,
Abrupt he paced the islet strand,

And eyed the rising sun, and laid
His hand on his impatient blade.
Beneath a rock, his vassals' care
Was prompt the ritual to prepare,
With deep and deathful meaning fraught:
For such Antiquity had taught
Was preface meet, ere yet abroad
The Cross of Fire should take its road.
The shrinking band stood oft aghast
At the impatient glance he cast;—
Such glance the mountain eagle threw,
As, from the cliffs of Benvenue,
She spread her dark sails on the wind,
And, high in middle heaven reclined,
With her broad shadow on the lake,
Silenced the warblers of the brake.

IV

A heap of wither'd boughs was piled,
Of juniper and rowan wild,
Mingled with shivers from the oak,
Rent by the lightning's recent stroke.
Brian, the Hermit, by it stood,
Barefooted, in his frock and hood.
His grisled beard and matted hair
Obscured a visage of despair;
His naked arms and legs, seam'd o'er,
The scars of frantic penance bore.
That monk, of savage form and face,
The impending danger of his race

Had drawn from deepest solitude,
Far in Benharrow's bosom rude.
Not his the mien of Christian priest,
But Druid's, from the grave released,
Whose harden'd heart and eye might brook
On human sacrifice to look;
And much, 'twas said, of heathen lore
Mix'd in the charms he mutter'd o'er.
The hallow'd creed gave only worse
And deadlier emphasis of curse;
No peasant sought that Hermit's prayer,
His cave the pilgrim shunn'd with care,
The eager huntsman knew his bound,
And in mid chase call'd off his hound;
Or if, in lonely glen or strath,
The desert-dweller met his path,
He pray'd, and sign'd the cross between,
While terror took devotion's mien.

V

Of Brian's birth strange tales were told.
His mother watch'd a midnight fold,
Built deep within a dreary glen,
Where scatter'd lay the bones of men,
In some forgotten battle slain,
And bleach'd by drifting wind and rain.
It might have tamed a warrior's heart,
To view such mockery of his art!
The knot-grass fetter'd there the hand,
Which once could burst an iron band;

Beneath the broad and ample bone,
That buckler'd heart to fear unknown,
A feeble and a timorous guest,
The field-fare framed her lowly nest;
There the slow blind-worm left his slime
On the fleet limbs that mock'd at time;
And there, too, lay the leader's skull,
Still wreathed with chaplet, flush'd and full,
For heath-bell with her purple bloom,
Supplied the bonnet and the plume.
All night, in this sad glen, the maid
Sate, shrouded in her mantle's shade:
She said, no shepherd sought her side,
No hunter's hand her snood untied,
Yet ne'er again to braid her hair
The virgin snood did Alice wear;
Gone was her maiden glee and sport,
Her maiden girdle all too short,
Nor sought she, from that fatal night,
Or holy church or blessed rite,
But lock'd her secret in her breast,
And died in travail, unconfess'd.

VI

Alone, among his young compeers,
Was Brian from his infant years;
A moody and heart-broken boy,
Estranged from sympathy and joy,
Bearing each taunt which careless tongue
On his mysterious lineage flung.

Whole nights he spent by moonlight pale,
To wood and stream his hap to wail,
Till, frantic, he as truth received
What of his birth the crowd believed,
And sought, in mist and meteor fire,
To meet and know his Phantom Sire!
In vain, to soothe his wayward fate,
The cloister oped her pitying gate;
In vain, the learning of the age
Unclasp'd the sable-letter'd page;
Even in its treasures he could find
Food for the fever of his mind.
Eager he read whatever tells
Of magic, cabala, and spells,
And every dark pursuit allied
To curious and presumptuous pride;
Till with fired brain and nerves o'erstrung,
And heart with mystic horrors wrung,
Desperate he sought Benharrow's den,
And hid him from the haunts of men.

VII

The desert gave him visions wild,
Such as might suit the spectre's child.
Where with black cliffs the torrents toil,
He watch'd the wheeling eddies boil,
Till, from their foam, his dazzled eyes
Beheld the River Demon rise;
The mountain mist took form and limb,
Of noontide hag, or goblin grim;

The midnight wind came wild and dread,
Swell'd with the voices of the dead;
Far on the future battle-heath
His eyes beheld the ranks of death:
Thus the lone Seer, from mankind hurl'd,
Shaped forth a disembodied world.
One lingering sympathy of mind
Still bound him to the mortal kind;
The only parent he could claim
Of ancient Alpine lineage came.
Late had he heard, in prophet's dream,
The fatal Ben-Shie's boding scream;
Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,
Of charging steeds, careering fast
Along Benharrow's shingly side,
Where mortal horseman ne'er might ride;
The thunderbolt had split the pine,—
All augur'd ill to Alpine's line.
He girt his loins, and came to show
The signals of impending woe,
And now stood prompt to bless or ban,
As bade the Chieftain of his clan.

VIII

'Twas all prepared;—and from the rock,
A goat, the patriarch of the flock,
Before the kindling pile was laid,
And pierced by Roderick's ready blade.

Patient the sickening victim eyed
The life-blood ebb in crimson tide,
Down his clogg'd beard and shaggy limb,
Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer,
A slender crosslet form'd with care,
A cubit's length in measure due;
The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
Whose parents in Inch-Cailliach wave
Their shadows o'er Clan-Alpine's grave,
And, answering Lomond's breezes deep,
Soothe many a chieftain's endless sleep.
The Cross, thus form'd, he held on high,
With wasted hand, and haggard eye,
And strange and mingled feelings woke,
While his anathema he spoke.

IX

"Woe to the clansman, who shall view
This symbol of sepulchral yew,
Forgetful that its branches grew
Where weep the heavens their holiest dew
On Alpine's dwelling low!
Deserter of his Chieftain's trust,
He ne'er shall mingle with their dust,
But, from his sires and kindred thrust,
Each clansman's execration just
Shall doom him wrath and woe."

He paused;—the word the vassals took,
With forward step and fiery look,
On high their naked brands they shook,
Their clattering targets wildly strook;
And first in murmur low,
Then, like the billow in his course,
That far to seaward finds his source,
And flings to shore his muster'd force,
Burst, with loud roar, their answer hoarse,
"Woe to the traitor, woe!"
Ben-an's grey scalp the accents knew,
The joyous wolf from cover drew,
The exulting eagle scream'd afar,—
They knew the voice of Alpine's war.

X

The shout was hush'd on lake and fell,
The Monk resumed his mutter'd spell:
Dismal and low its accents came,
The while he scathed the Cross with flame:
And the few words that reach'd the air,
Although the holiest name was there,
Had more of blasphemy than prayer.
But when he shook above the crowd
Its kindled points, he spoke aloud:—
"Woe to the wretch, who fails to rear
At this dread sign the ready spear!
For, as the flames this symbol sear,
His home, the refuge of his fear,

A kindred fate shall know;
Far o'er its roof the volumed flame
Clan-Alpine's vengeance shall proclaim,
While maids and matrons on his name
Shall call down wretchedness and shame,
And infamy and woe."
Then rose the cry of females, shrill
As goss-hawk's whistle on the hill,
Denouncing misery and ill,
Mingled with childhood's babbling trill
Of curses stammer'd slow;
Answering, with imprecation dread,
"Sunk be his home in embers red!
And cursed be the meanest shed
That e'er shall hide the houseless head,
We doom to want and woe!"
A sharp and shrieking echo gave,
Coir-Uriskin, thy goblin cave!
And the grey pass where birches wave,
On Beala-nam-bo.

XI

Then deeper paused the priest anew,
And hard his labouring breath he drew,
While, with set teeth and clenched hand,
And eyes that glow'd like fiery brand,
He meditated curse more dread,
And deadlier, on the clansman's head,

Who, summon'd to his chieftain's aid
The signal saw and disobey'd.
The crosslet's points of sparkling wood,
He quench'd among the bubbling blood,
And, as again the sign he rear'd,
Hollow and hoarse his voice was heard:
"When flits this Cross from man to man,
Vich-Alpine's summons to his clan,
Burst be the ear that fails to heed!
Palsied the foot that shuns to speed!
May ravens tear the careless eyes,
Wolves make the coward heart their prize!
As sinks that blood-stream in the earth,
So may his heart's blood drench his hearth!
As dies in hissing gore the spark,
Quench thou his light, Destruction dark!
And be the grace to him denied,
Bought by this sign to all beside!"
He ceased; no echo gave agen
The murmur of the deep Amen.

XII

Then Roderick, with impatient look,
From Brian's hand the symbol took:
"Speed, Malise, speed!" he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
"The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed!"

Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
A barge across Loch Katrine flew;
High stood the henchman on the prow,
So rapidly the barge-men row,
The bubbles, where they launched the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had near'd the mainland hill;
And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathom wide,
When lightly bounded to the land
The messenger of blood and brand.

XIII

Speed, Malise, speed! the dun deer's hide
On fleeter foot was never tied.
Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced.
Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
Burst down like torrent from its crest;
With short and springing footstep pass
The trembling bog and false morass;
Across the brook like roebuck bound,
And thread the brake like questing hound;
The crag is high, the scaur is deep,
Yet shrink not from the desperate leap:
Parch'd are thy burning lips and brow,
Yet by the fountain pause not now;

Herald of battle, fate, and fear,
Stretch onward in thy fleet career!
The wounded hind thou track'st not now,
Pursuest not maid through greenwood bough,
Nor pliest thou now thy flying pace,
With rivals in the mountain race;
But danger, death, and warrior deed,
Are in thy course—speed, Malise, speed!

XIV

Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise;
From winding glen, from upland brown,
They pour'd each hardy tenant down.
Nor slack'd the messenger his pace;
He show'd the sign, he named the place,
And, pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamour and surprise behind.
The fisherman forsook the strand,
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand;
With changed cheer, the mower blithe
Left in the half-cut swathe the scythe;
The herds without a keeper stray'd,
The plough was in mid-furrow staid,
The falc'ner toss'd his hawk away,
The hunter left the stag at bay;
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rush'd to arms;

So swept the tumult and affray
Along the margin of Achray.
Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er
Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!
The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep
So stilly on thy bosom deep,
The lark's blithe carol, from the cloud,
Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

XV

Speed, Malise, speed! the lake is past,
Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half seen,
Half hidden in the copse so green;
There mayst thou rest, thy labour done,
Their Lord shall speed the signal on.—
As stoops the hawk upon his prey,
The henchman shot him down the way.
—What woeful accents load the gale?
The funeral yell, the female wail!
A gallant hunter's sport is o'er,
A valiant warrior fights no more.
Who, in the battle or the chase,
At Roderick's side shall fill his place!—
Within the hall, where torches' ray
Supplies the excluded beams of day,
Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,
And o'er him streams his widow's tear.

His stripling son stands mournful by,
His youngest weeps, but knows not why;
The village maids and matrons round
The dismal coronach resound.

XVI

CORONACH

He is gone on the mountain,
  He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
  When our need was the sorest.
The font, reappearing,
  From the rain-drops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
  To Duncan no morrow!
The hand of the reaper
  Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
  Wails manhood in glory.
The autumn winds rushing
  Waft the leaves that are searest,
But our flower was in flushing,
  When blighting was nearest.
Fleet foot on the correi,
  Sage counsel in cumber,
Red hand in the foray,
  How sound is thy slumber!

Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain
Thou art gone, and for ever!

XVII

See Stumah, who, the bier beside,
His master's corpse with wonder eyed,
Poor Stumah! whom his least halloo
Could send like lightning o'er the dew,
Bristles his crest, and points his ears,
As if some stranger step he hears.
'Tis not a mourner's muffled tread,
Who comes to sorrow o'er the dead,
But headlong haste, or deadly fear,
Urge the precipitate career.
All stand aghast:—unheeding all,
The henchman bursts into the hall;
Before the dead man's bier he stood;
Held forth the Cross besmear'd with blood;
"The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! clansmen, speed!"

XVIII

Angus, the heir of Duncan's line,
Sprung forth and seized the fatal sign.
In haste the stripling to his side
His father's dirk and broadsword tied;

But when he saw his mother's eye
Watch him in speechless agony,
Back to her open'd arms he flew,
Press'd on her lips a fond adieu—
"Alas!" she sobb'd,—"and yet be gone,
And speed thee forth, like Duncan's son!"
One look he cast upon the bier,
Dash'd from his eye the gathering tear,
Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
And toss'd aloft his bonnet crest,
Then, like the high-bred colt, when, freed,
First he essays his fire and speed,
He vanish'd, and o'er moor and moss
Sped forward with the Fiery Cross.
Suspended was the widow's tear,
While yet his footsteps she could hear;
And when she mark'd the henchman's eye
Wet with unwonted sympathy,
"Kinsman," she said, "his race is run,
That should have sped thine errand on;
The oak has fall'n,—the sapling bough
Is all Duncraggan's shelter now.
Yet trust I well, his duty done,
The orphan's God will guard my son.—
And you, in many a danger true,
At Duncan's hest your blades that drew,
To arms, and guard that orphan's head!
Let babes and women wail the dead."
Then weapon-clang, and martial call,
Resounded through the funeral hall,

While from the walls the attendant band
Snatch'd sword and targe, with hurried hand;
And short and flitting energy
Glanced from the mourner's sunken eye,
As if the sounds to warrior dear,
Might rouse her Duncan from his bier.
But faded soon that borrow'd force;
Grief claim'd his right, and tears their course.

XIX

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
It glanced like lightning up Strath-Ire.
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew;
The tear that gather'd in his eye
He left the mountain breeze to dry;
Until, where Teith's young waters roll,
Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,
That graced the sable strath with green,
The chapel of St. Bride was seen.
Swoln was the stream, remote the bridge,
But Angus paused not on the edge;
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
Though reel'd his sympathetic eye,
He dash'd amid the torrent's roar:
His right hand high the crosslet bore,
His left the pole-axe grasp'd, to guide
And stay his footing in the tide.
He stumbled twice—the foam splash'd high;
With hoarser swell the stream raced by;

And had he fall'n,—for ever there,
Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir!
But still, as if in parting life,
Firmer he grasp'd the Cross of strife,
Until the opposing bank he gain'd,
And up the chapel pathway strain'd.

XX

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
Had sought the chapel of St. Bride.
Her troth Tombea's Mary gave
To Norman, heir of Armandave.
And, issuing from the Gothic arch,
The bridal now resumed their march.
In rude, but glad procession, came
Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame;
And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,
Which snooded maiden would not hear:
And children, that, unwitting why,
Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry;
And minstrels, that in measures vied
Before the young and bonny bride,
Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose
The tear and blush of morning rose.
With virgin step, and bashful hand,
She held the 'kerchief's snowy band;
The gallant bridegroom, by her side,
Beheld his prize with victor's pride,
And the glad mother in her ear
Was closely whispering word of cheer.

XXI

Who meets them at the churchyard gate?
The messenger of fear and fate!
Haste in his hurried accent lies,
And grief is swimming in his eyes.
All dripping from the recent flood,
Panting and travel-soil'd he stood,
The fatal sign of fire and sword
Held forth, and spoke the appointed word:
"The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!"
And must he change so soon the hand,
Just link'd to his by holy band,
For the fell Cross of blood and brand?
And must the day, so blithe that rose,
And promised rapture in the close,
Before its setting hour, divide
The bridegroom from the plighted bride?
O fatal doom!—it must! it must!
Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust,
Her summons dread, brook no delay;
Stretch to the race—away! away!

XXII

Yet slow he laid his plaid aside,
And, lingering, eyed his lovely bride,
Until he saw the starting tear
Speak woe he might not stop to cheer;
Then, trusting not a second look,
In haste he sped him up the brook,

Nor backward glanced, till on the heath
Where Lubnaig's lake supplies the Teith.
—What in the racer's bosom stirr'd?
The sickening pang of hope deferr'd,
And memory, with a torturing train
Of all his morning visions vain.
Mingled with love's impatience, came
The manly thirst for martial fame;
The stormy joy of mountaineers,
Ere yet they rush upon the spears;
And zeal for Clan and Chieftain burning,
And hope, from well-fought field returning,
With war's red honours on his crest,
To clasp his Mary to his breast.
Stung by such thoughts, o'er bank and brae,
Like fire from flint he glanced away,
While high resolve, and feeling strong,
Burst into voluntary song.

XXIII

SONG

The heath this night must be my bed,
The bracken curtain for my head,
My lullaby the warder's tread,
Far, far, from love and thee, Mary;
To-morrow eve, more stilly laid,
My couch may be my bloody plaid,
My vesper song, thy wail, sweet maid!
It will not waken me, Mary!

I may not, dare not, fancy now
The grief that clouds thy lovely brow,
I dare not think upon thy vow,
And all it promised me, Mary.
No fond regret must Norman know;
When bursts Clan-Alpine on the foe,
His heart must be like bended bow,
His foot like arrow free, Mary.

A time will come with feeling fraught,
For, if I fall in battle fought,
Thy hapless lover's dying thought
Shall be a thought on thee, Mary.
And if return'd from conquer'd foes,
How blithely will the evening close,
How sweet the linnet sing repose,
To my young bride and me, Mary!

XXIV

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,
Rushing, in conflagration strong,
Thy deep ravines and dells along,
Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
And reddening the dark lakes below;
Nor faster speeds it, nor so far,
As o'er thy heaths the voice of war.
The signal roused to martial coil,
The sullen margin of Loch Voil,

Waked still Loch Doine, and to the source
Alarm'd, Balvaig, thy swampy course;
Thence southward turn'd its rapid road
Adown Strath-Gartney's valley broad,
Till rose in arms each man might claim
A portion in Clan-Alpine's name,
From the grey sire, whose trembling hand
Could hardly buckle on his brand,
To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
Were yet scarce terror to the crow.
Each valley, each sequester'd glen,
Muster'd its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height
In Highland dales their streams unite,
Still gathering, as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong,
Till at the rendezvous they stood
By hundreds prompt for blows and blood,
Each train'd to arms since life began,
Owning no tie but to his clan,
No oath, but by his chieftain's hand,
No law, but Roderick Dhu's command.

XXV

That summer morn had Roderick Dhu
Survey'd the skirts of Benvenue,
And sent his scouts o'er hill and heath,
To view the frontiers of Menteith.
All backward came with news of truce;
Still lay each martial Græme and Bruce,

In Rednoch courts no horsemen wait,
No banner waved on Cardross gate,
On Duchray's towers no beacon shone,
Nor scared the herons from Loch Con;
All seem'd at peace.—Now wot ye why
The Chieftain, with such anxious eye,
Ere to the muster he repair,
This western frontier scann'd with care?—
In Benvenue's most darksome cleft,
A fair, though cruel, pledge was left;
For Douglas, to his promise true,
That morning from the isle withdrew,
And in a deep sequester'd dell
Had sought a low and lonely cell.
By many a bard, in Celtic tongue,
Has Coir-nan-Uriskin been sung;
A softer name the Saxons gave,
And call'd the grot the Goblin-cave.

XXVI

It was a wild and strange retreat,
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
The dell, upon the mountain's crest,
Yawn'd like a gash on warrior's breast;
Its trench had staid full many a rock,
Hurl'd by primeval earthquake shock
From Benvenue's grey summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frown'd incumbent o'er the spot,
And form'd the rugged silvan grot.

The oak and birch, with mingled shade,
At noontide there a twilight made,
Unless when short and sudden shone
Some straggling beam on cliff or stone,
With such a glimpse as prophet's eye
Gains on thy depth, Futurity.
No murmur waked the solemn still,
Save tinkling of a fountain rill;
But when the wind chafed with the lake,
A sullen sound would upward break,
With dashing hollow voice, that spoke
The incessant war of wave and rock.
Suspended cliffs, with hideous sway,
Seem'd nodding o'er the cavern grey.
From such a den the wolf had sprung,
In such the wild-cat leaves her young;
Yet Douglas and his daughter fair
Sought for a space their safety there.
Grey Superstition's whisper dread
Debarr'd the spot to vulgar tread;
For there, she said, did fays resort,
And satyrs hold their silvan court,
By moonlight tread their mystic maze,
And blast the rash beholder's gaze.

XXVII

Now eve, with western shadows long,
Floated on Katrine bright and strong,
When Roderick, with a chosen few,
Repass'd the heights of Benvenue.

Above the Goblin-cave they go,
Through the wild pass of Beal-nam-bo:
The prompt retainers speed before,
To launch the shallop from the shore,
For 'cross Loch Katrine lies his way
To view the passes of Achray,
And place his clansmen in array.
Yet lags the chief in musing mind,
Unwonted sight, his men behind.
A single page, to bear his sword,
Alone attended on his lord;
The rest their way through thickets break,
And soon await him by the lake.
It was a fair and gallant sight,
To view them from the neighbouring height,
By the low-levell'd sunbeam's light!
For strength and stature, from the clan
Each warrior was a chosen man,
As even afar might well be seen,
By their proud step and martial mien.
Their feathers dance, their tartans float,
Their targets gleam, as by the boat
A wild and warlike group they stand,
That well became such mountain-strand.

XXVIII

Their Chief, with step reluctant, still
Was lingering on the craggy hill,
Hard by where turn'd apart the road
To Douglas's obscure abode.

It was but with that dawning morn,
That Roderick Dhu had proudly sworn
To drown his love in war's wild roar,
Nor think of Ellen Douglas more;
But he who stems a stream with sand,
And fetters flame with flaxen band,
Has yet a harder task to prove—
By firm resolve to conquer love!
Eve finds the Chief, like restless ghost,
Still hovering near his treasure lost;
For though his haughty heart deny
A parting meeting to his eye,
Still fondly strains his anxious ear,
The accents of her voice to hear,
And inly did he curse the breeze
That waked to sound the rustling trees.
But hark! what mingles in the strain?
It is the harp of Allan-bane,
That wakes its measure slow and high,
Attuned to sacred minstrelsy.
What melting voice attends the strings?
'Tis Ellen, or an angel, sings.

XXIX

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

Ave Maria! maiden mild!
Listen to a maiden's prayer!
Thou canst hear though from the wild,
Thou canst save amid despair.

Safe may we sleep beneath thy care,
Though banish'd, outcast, and reviled—
Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer;
Mother, hear a suppliant child!
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! undefiled!
The flinty couch we now must share
Shall seem with down of eider piled,
If thy protection hover there.
The murky cavern's heavy air
Shall breathe of balm if thou hast smiled;
Then, Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer;
Mother, list a suppliant child!
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! stainless styled!
Foul demons of the earth and air,
From this their wonted haunt exiled,
Shall flee before thy presence fair.
We bow us to our lot of care,
Beneath thy guidance reconciled;
Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer,
And for a father hear a child!
Ave Maria!

XXX

Died on the harp the closing hymn—
Unmoved in attitude and limb,
As list'ning still, Clan-Alpine's lord
Stood leaning on his heavy sword,

Until the page, with humble sign,
Twice pointed to the sun's decline.
Then while his plaid he round him cast,
"It is the last time—'tis the last,"
He muttered thrice,—"the last time e'er
That angel voice shall Roderick hear!"
It was a goading thought—his stride
Hied hastier down the mountain side;
Sullen he flung him in the boat,
And instant 'cross the lake it shot.
They landed in that silvery bay,
And eastward held their hasty way,
Till, with the latest beams of light,
The band arrived on Lanrick height,
Where muster'd, in the vale below,
Clan-Alpine's men in martial show.

XXXI

A various scene the clansmen made,
Some sate, some stood, some slowly stray'd;
But most with mantles folded round,
Were couch'd to rest upon the ground,
Scarce to be known by curious eye,
From the deep heather where they lie,
So well was match'd the tartan screen
With heath-bell dark and brackens green,
Unless where, here and there, a blade,
Or lance's point, a glimmer made,
Like glow-worm twinkling through the shade.

But when, advancing through the gloom,
They saw the Chieftain's eagle plume,
Their shout of welcome, shrill and wide,
Shook the steep mountain's steady side.
Thrice it arose, and lake and fell
Three times return'd the martial yell;
It died upon Bochastle's plain,
And Silence claim'd her evening reign.

CANTO FOURTH

THE PROPHECY

I

"THE rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest wash'd with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalm'd in tears.
O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
Emblem of hope and love through future years!"—
Thus spoke young Norman, heir of Armandave,
What time the sun arose on Vennachar's broad wave.

II

Such fond conceit, half said, half sung,
Love prompted to the bridegroom's tongue.
All while he stripp'd the wild-rose spray,
His axe and bow beside him lay,
For on a pass 'twixt lake and wood,
A wakeful sentinel he stood.

Hark!—on the rock a footstep rung,
And instant to his arms he sprung.
"Stand, or thou diest!—What, Malise?—soon
Art thou return'd from Braes of Doune.
By thy keen step and glance I know,
Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe."—
(For while the Fiery Cross hied on,
On distant scout had Malise gone.)
"Where sleeps the Chief?" the henchman said.
"Apart, in yonder misty glade;
To his lone couch I'll be your guide."—
Then call'd a slumberer by his side,
And stirr'd him with his slacken'd bow—
"Up, up, Glentarkin! rouse thee, ho!
We seek the Chieftain; on the track,
Keep eagle watch till I come back."

III

Together up the pass they sped:
"What of the foeman?" Norman said.—
"Varying reports from near and far;
This certain,—that a band of war
Has for two days been ready boune,
At prompt command, to march from Doune;
King James, the while, with princely powers,
Holds revelry in Stirling towers.
Soon will this dark and gathering cloud
Speak on our glens in thunder loud.
Inured to bide such bitter bout,
The warrior's plaid may bear it out;

But, Norman, how wilt thou provide
A shelter for thy bonny bride?"—
"What! know ye not that Roderick's care
To the lone isle hath caused repair
Each maid and matron of the clan,
And every child and aged man
Unfit for arms; and given his charge,
Nor skiff nor shallop, boat nor barge,
Upon these lakes shall float at large,
But all beside the islet moor,
That such dear pledge may rest secure?"—

IV

"'Tis well advised—the Chieftain's plan
Bespeaks the father of his clan.
But wherefore sleeps Sir Roderick Dhu
Apart from all his followers true?"—
"It is, because last evening-tide
Brian an augury hath tried,
Of that dread kind which must not be
Unless in dread extremity,
The Taghairm call'd; by which, afar,
Our sires foresaw the events of war.
Duncraggan's milk-white bull they slew."

MALISE

"Ah! Well the gallant brute I knew
The choicest of the prey we had,
When swept our merry-men Gallangad.
His hide was snow, his horns were dark,

His red eye glow'd like fiery spark;
So fierce, so tameless, and so fleet,
Sore did he cumber our retreat,
And kept our stoutest kernes in awe,
Even at the pass of Beal 'maha.
But steep and flinty was the road,
And sharp the hurrying pikeman's goad,
And when we came to Dennan's Row,
A child might scatheless stroke his brow."—

V

NORMAN

"That bull was slain: his reeking hide
They stretch'd the cataract beside,
Whose waters their wild tumult toss
Adown the black and craggy boss
Of that huge cliff, whose ample verge
Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.
Couch'd on a shelve beneath its brink,
Close where the thundering torrents sink,
Rocking beneath their headlong sway,
And drizzled by the ceaseless spray,
Midst groan of rock, and roar of stream,
The wizard waits prophetic dream.
Nor distant rests the Chief;—but hush!
See, gliding slow through mist and bush,
The hermit gains yon rock, and stands
To gaze upon our slumbering bands.

Seems he not, Malise, like a ghost,
That hovers o'er a slaughter'd host?
Or raven on the blasted oak,
That, watching while the deer is broke,
His morsel claims with sullen croak?"

MALISE

—"Peace! peace! to other than to me,
Thy words were evil augury;
But still I hold Sir Roderick's blade
Clan-Alpine's omen and her aid,
Not aught that, glean'd from heaven or hell,
Yon fiend-begotten Monk can tell.
The Chieftain joins him, see—and now,
Together they descend the brow."

VI

And, as they came, with Alpine's Lord
The Hermit Monk held solemn word:—
"Roderick! it is a fearful strife,
For man endow'd with mortal life,
Whose shroud of sentient clay can still
Feel feverish pang and fainting chill,
Whose eye can stare in stony trance,
Whose hair can rouse like warrior's lance,—
'Tis hard for such to view, unfurl'd,
The curtain of the future world.
Yet, witness every quaking limb,
My sunken pulse, my eyeballs dim,

My soul with harrowing anguish torn,—
This for my Chieftain have I borne!—
The shapes that sought my fearful couch,
A human tongue may ne'er avouch;
No mortal man,—save he, who, bred
Between the living and the dead,
Is gifted beyond nature's law,—
Had e'er survived to say he saw.
At length the fatal answer came,
In characters of living flame!
Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul;—
WHICH SPILLS THE FOREMOST FOEMAN'S LIFE,
THAT PARTY CONQUERS IN THE STRIFE."—

VII

"Thanks, Brian, for thy zeal and care!
Good is thine augury, and fair.
Clan-Alpine ne'er in battle stood,
But first our broadswords tasted blood.
A surer victim still I know,
Self-offer'd to the auspicious blow:
A spy has sought my land this morn,—
No eve shall witness his return!
My followers guard each pass's mouth,
To east, to westward, and to south;
Red Murdoch, bribed to be his guide,
Has charge to lead his steps aside,
Till, in deep path or dingle brown,
He light on those shall bring him down.

—But see, who comes his news to show!
Malise! what tidings of the foe?"—

VIII

"At Doune, o'er many a spear and glaive
Two Barons proud their banners wave.
I saw the Moray's silver star,
And mark'd the sable pale of Mar."—
"By Alpine's soul, high tidings those!
I love to hear of worthy foes.
When move they on?"—"To-morrow's noon
Will see them here for battle boune."—
"Then shall it see a meeting stern!—
But, for the place—say, couldst thou learn
Nought of the friendly clans of Earn?
Strengthen'd by them, we well might bide
The battle on Benledi's side.
Thou couldst not?—well! Clan-Alpine's men
Shall man the Trosachs' shaggy glen;
Within Loch Katrine's gorge we'll fight,
All in our maids' and matrons' sight,
Each for his hearth and household fire,
Father for child, and son for sire,—
Lover for maid beloved!—But why—
Is it the breeze affects mine eye?
Or dost thou come, ill-omen'd tear!
A messenger of doubt and fear?
No! sooner may the Saxon lance
Unfix Benledi from his stance,

Than doubt or terror can pierce through
The unyielding heart of Roderick Dhu!
'Tis stubborn as his trusty targe.—
Each to his post—all know their charge."
The pibroch sounds, the bands advance,
The broadswords gleam, the banners dance,
Obedient to the Chieftain's glance.
—I turn me from the martial roar,
And seek Coir-Uriskin once more.

IX

Where is the Douglas?—he is gone;
And Ellen sits on the grey stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan;
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are pour'd on her unheeding ear.—
"He will return—Dear lady, trust!—
With joy return;—he will—he must.
Well was it time to seek, afar,
Some refuge from impending war,
When e'en Clan-Alpine's rugged swarm
Are cow'd by the approaching storm.
I saw their boats with many a light,
Floating the live-long yesternight,
Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north;
I mark'd at morn how close they ride,
Thick moor'd by the lone islet's side,

Like wild-ducks couching in the fen,
When stoops the hawk upon the glen.
Since this rude race dare not abide
The peril on the mainland side,
Shall not thy noble father's care
Some safe retreat for thee prepare?"—

X

ELLEN

"No, Allan, no! Pretext so kind
My wakeful terrors could not blind.
When in such tender tone, yet grave,
Douglas a parting blessing gave,
The tear that glisten'd in his eye
Drown'd not his purpose fix'd on high.
My soul, though feminine and weak,
Can image his; e'en as the lake,
Itself disturb'd by slightest stroke,
Reflects the invulnerable rock.
He hears report of battle rife,
He deems himself the cause of strife.
I saw him redden, when the theme
Turn'd, Allan, on thine idle dream
Of Malcolm Græme in fetters bound,
Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
Think'st thou he trow'd thine omen aught?
Oh no! 'twas apprehensive thought
For the kind youth,—for Roderick too—
(Let me be just) that friend so true;

In danger both, and in our cause!
Minstrel, the Douglas dare not pause.
Why else that solemn warning given,
'If not on earth, we meet in heaven!'
Why else, to Cambus-kenneth's fane
If eve return him not again,
Am I to hie, and make me known?
Alas! he goes to Scotland's throne,
Buys his friend's safety with his own;—
He goes to do—what I had done,
Had Douglas' daughter been his son!"—

XI

"Nay, lovely Ellen!—dearest, nay!
If aught should his return delay,
He only named yon holy fane
As fitting place to meet again.
Be sure he's safe; and for the Græme,—
Heaven's blessing on his gallant name!—
My vision'd sight may yet prove true,
Nor bode of ill to him or you.
When did my gifted dream beguile?
Think of the stranger at the isle,
And think upon the harpings slow,
That presaged this approaching woe!
Sooth was my prophecy of fear;
Believe it when it augurs cheer.
Would we had left this dismal spot!
Ill luck still haunts a fairy grot.

Of such a wondrous tale I know—
Dear lady, change that look of woe,
My harp was wont thy grief to cheer."

ELLEN

"Well, be it as thou wilt; I hear,
But cannot stop the bursting tear."
The Minstrel tried his simple art,
But distant far was Ellen's heart.

XII

BALLAD—ALICE BRAND

Merry it is in the good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

"O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and wold,
As outlaws wont to do.

"O Alice, 'twas all for thy locks so bright,
And 'twas all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight,
Thy brother bold I slew.

"Now must I teach to hew the beech
The hand that held the glaive,
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

"And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must shear from the slaughter'd deer,
To keep the cold away."—

"O Richard! if my brother died,
'Twas but a fatal chance;
For darkling was the battle tried,
And fortune sped the lance.

"If pall and vair no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen,
As warm, we'll say, is the russet grey,
As gay the forest-green.

"And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand."

XIII

BALLAD—(*Continued*)

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,
Who wonn'd within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruin'd church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

"Why sounds yon stroke on beech and oak,
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer,
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairies' fatal green?

"Up, Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christen'd man;
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For mutter'd word or ban.

"Lay on him the curse of the wither'd heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye;
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die."

XIV

BALLAD—(*Continued*)

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
Though the birds have still'd their singing;
The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf,
Before Lord Richard stands,

And, as he cross'd and bless'd himself,
"I fear not sign," quoth the grisly elf,
"That is made with bloody hands."

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
"And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer."—

"Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,
The blood of Ethert Brand."

Then forward stepp'd she, Alice Brand,
And made the holy sign,—
"And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
A spotless hand is mine.

"And I conjure thee, Demon elf,
By Him whom Demons fear,
To show us whence thou art thyself,
And what thine errand here?"—

XV

BALLAD—*(Continued)*

"'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in Fairy-land
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch's side,
With bit and bridle ringing:

"And gaily shines the Fairy-land—
But all is glistening show,
Like the idle gleam that December's beam
Can dart on ice and snow.

"And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

"It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And, 'twixt life and death, was snatch'd away
To the joyless Elfin bower.

"But wist I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,
I might regain my mortal mould,
As fair a form as thine."

She cross'd him once—she cross'd him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She cross'd him thrice, that lady bold;
He rose beneath her hand
The fairest knight on Scottish mould,
Her brother, Ethert Brand!

Merry it is in good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
But merrier were they in Dunfermline grey,
When all the bells were ringing.

XVI

Just as the minstrel sounds were staid,
A stranger climb'd the steepy glade;
His martial step, his stately mien,
His hunting suit of Lincoln green,
His eagle glance, remembrance claims—
'Tis Snowdoun's Knight, 'tis James Fitz-James.
Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then, starting, scarce suppress'd a scream
"O stranger! in such hour of fear,
What evil hap has brought thee here?"—
"An evil hap how can it be,
That bids me look again on thee?
By promise bound, my former guide
Met me betimes this morning tide,
And marshall'd, over bank and bourne,
The happy path of my return."—
"The happy path!—what! said he nought
Of war, of battle to be fought,
Of guarded pass?"—"No, by my faith!
Nor saw I aught could augur scathe."—
"O haste thee, Allan, to the kern,
—Yonder his tartans I discern;

Learn thou his purpose, and conjure
That he will guide the stranger sure!—
What prompted thee, unhappy man?
The meanest serf in Roderick's clan
Had not been bribed by love or fear,
Unknown to him to guide thee here."—

XVII

"Sweet Ellen, dear my life must be
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath,
When love or honour's weigh'd with death.
Then let me profit by my chance,
And speak my purpose bold at once.
I come to bear thee from a wild,
Where ne'er before such blossom smiled;
By this soft hand to lead thee far
From frantic scenes of feud and war.
Near Bochastle my horses wait;
They bear us soon to Stirling gate.
I'll place thee in a lovely bower,
I'll guard thee like a tender flower"—
"O! hush, Sir Knight! 'twere female art,
To say I do not read thy heart;
Too much, before, my selfish ear
Was idly soothed my praise to hear.
That fatal bait hath lured thee back,
In deathful hour, o'er dangerous track;

And how, O how, can I atone
The wreck my vanity brought on!—
One way remains—I'll tell him all—
Yes! struggling bosom, forth it shall!
Thou, whose light folly bears the blame,
Buy thine own pardon with thy shame!
But first—my father is a man
Outlaw'd and exiled, under ban;
The price of blood is on his head,
With me 'twere infamy to wed.—
Still wouldst thou speak?—then hear the truth!
Fitz-James, there is a noble youth,—
If yet he is!—exposed for me
And mine to dread extremity—
Thou hast the secret of my heart;
Forgive, be generous, and depart!"

XVIII

Fitz-James knew every wily train
A lady's fickle heart to gain,
But here he knew and felt them vain.
There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
To give her steadfast speech the lie;
In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled in her cheek the blood,
And told her love with such a sigh
Of deep and hopeless agony,
As death had seal'd her Malcolm's doom,
And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.

Hope vanish'd from Fitz-James's eye,
But not with hope fled sympathy.
He proffer'd to attend her side,
As brother would a sister guide.—
"O! little know'st thou Roderick's heart!
Safer for both we go apart.
O haste thee, and from Allan learn,
If thou may'st trust yon wily kern."
With hand upon his forehead laid,
The conflict of his mind to shade,
A parting step or two he made;
Then, as some thought had cross'd his brain,
He paused, and turn'd, and came again.

XIX

"Hear, lady, yet, a parting word!—
It chanced in fight that my poor sword
Preserved the life of Scotland's lord.
This ring the grateful Monarch gave,
And bade, when I had boon to crave,
To bring it back, and boldly claim
The recompense that I would name.
Ellen, I am no courtly lord,
But one who lives by lance and sword,
Whose castle is his helm and shield,
His lordship the embattled field.
What from a prince can I demand,
Who neither reck of state nor land?

Ellen, thy hand—the ring is thine;
Each guard and usher knows the sign.
Seek thou the king without delay;
This signet shall secure thy way;
And claim thy suit, whate'er it be,
As ransom of his pledge to me."
He placed the golden circlet on,
Paused—kiss'd her hand—and then was gone.
The aged Minstrel stood aghast,
So hastily Fitz-James shot past.
He join'd his guide, and wending down
The ridges of the mountain brown,
Across the stream they took their way,
That joins Loch Katrine to Achray.

XX

All in the Trosachs' glen was still,
Noontide was sleeping on the hill:
Sudden his guide whoop'd loud and high—
"Murdoch! was that a signal cry?"—
He stammer'd forth—"I shout to scare
Yon raven from his dainty fare."
He look'd—he knew the raven's prey,
His own brave steed:—"Ah! gallant grey!
For thee—for me, perchance—'twere well
We ne'er had seen the Trosachs' dell.—
Murdoch, move first—but silently;
Whistle or whoop, and thou shalt die!"

Jealous and sullen on they fared,
Each silent, each upon his guard.

XXI

Now wound the path its dizzy ledge
Around a precipice's edge,
When lo! a wasted female form,
Blighted by wrath of sun and storm,
In tatter'd weeds and wild array,
Stood on a cliff beside the way,
And glancing round her restless eye,
Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
Seem'd nought to mark, yet all to spy.
Her brow was wreath'd with gaudy broom;
With gesture wild she waved a plume
Of feathers, which the eagles fling
To crag and cliff from dusky wing;
Such spoils her desperate step had sought,
Where scarce was footing for the goat.
The tartan plaid she first descried,
And shriek'd till all the rocks replied;
As loud she laugh'd when near they drew,
For then the Lowland garb she knew;
And then her hands she wildly wrung,
And then she wept, and then she sung—
She sung!—the voice, in better time,
Perchance to harp or lute might chime;
And now, though strain'd and roughen'd, still
Rung wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII

SONG

They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
  They say my brain is warp'd and wrung—
I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
  I cannot pray in Highland tongue.
But were I now where Allan glides,
Or heard my native Devan's tides,
So sweetly would I rest, and pray
That Heaven would close my wintry day!

'Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
  They made me to the church repair;
It was my bridal morn they said,
  And my true love would meet me there.
But woe betide the cruel guile,
That drown'd in blood the morning smile!
And woe betide the fairy dream!
I only waked to sob and scream.

XXIII

"Who is this maid? what means her lay?
She hovers o'er the hollow way,
And flutters wide her mantle grey,
As the lone heron spreads his wing,
By twilight, o'er a haunted spring."
" 'Tis Blanche of Devan," Murdoch said,
"A crazed and captive Lowland maid,

Ta'en on the morn she was a bride,
When Roderick foray'd Devan side.
The gay bridegroom resistance made,
And felt our Chief's unconquer'd blade.
I marvel she is now at large,
But oft she 'scapes from Maudlin's charge.—
Hence, brain-sick fool!"—He raised his bow:—
"Now, if thou strik'st her but one blow,
I'll pitch thee from the cliff as far
As ever peasant pitch'd a bar!"—
"Thanks, champion, thanks!" the Maniac cried,
And press'd her to Fitz-James's side.
"See the grey pennons I prepare,
To seek my true-love through the air!
I will not lend that savage groom,
To break his fall, one downy plume!
No!—deep amid disjointed stones,
The wolves shall batten on his bones,
And then shall his detested plaid,
By bush and brier in mid air staid,
Wave forth a banner fair and free,
Meet signal for their revelry."—

XXIV

"Hush thee, poor maiden, and be still!"—
"O! thou look'st kindly, and I will.—
Mine eye has dried and wasted been,
But still it loves the Lincoln green;
And, though mine ear is all unstrung,
Still, still it loves the Lowland tongue.

"For O my sweet William was forester true,
He stole poor Blanche's heart away!
His coat it was all of the greenwood hue,
And so blithely he trill'd the Lowland lay:

"It was not that I meant to tell . . .
But thou art wise and guessest well."
Then, in a low and broken tone,
And hurried note, the song went on.
Still on the Clansman, fearfully,
She fix'd her apprehensive eye;
Then turn'd it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV

"The toils are pitch'd, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily;
The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.

"It was a stag, a stag of ten,
Bearing its branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

"It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warn'd him of the toils below,
O, so faithfully, faithfully!

"He had an eye, and he could heed,
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed—
Hunters watch so narrowly."

XXVI

Fitz-James's mind was passion-toss'd,
When Ellen's hints and fears were lost;
But Murdoch's shout suspicion wrought,
And Blanche's song conviction brought.—
Not like a stag that spies the snare,
But lion of the hunt aware,
He waved at once his blade on high,
"Disclose thy treachery, or die!"
Forth at full speed the Clansman flew,
But in his race his bow he drew.
The shaft just grazed Fitz-James's crest,
And thrilled in Blanche's faded breast.—
Murdoch of Alpine! prove thy speed,
For ne'er had Alpine's son such need!
With heart of fire, and foot of wind,
The fierce avenger is behind!
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit death—the prize is life!
Thy kindred ambush lies before,
Close couch'd upon the heathery moor;
Them couldst thou reach!—it may not be—
Thine ambush'd kin thou ne'er shalt see,
The fiery Saxon gains on thee!

—Resistless speeds the deadly thrust,
As lightning strikes the pine to dust;
With foot and hand Fitz-James must strain,
Ere he can win his blade again.
Bent o'er the fall'n, with falcon eye,
He grimly smiled to see him die;
Then slower wended back his way,
Where the poor maiden bleeding lay.

XXVII

She sate beneath a birchen-tree,
Her elbow resting on her knee;
She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,
And gazed on it, and feebly laugh'd;
Her wreath of broom and feathers grey,
Daggled with blood, beside her lay.
The Knight to staunch the life-stream tried,—
"Stranger, it is in vain!" she cried.
"This hour of death has given me more
Of reason's power than years before;
For, as these ebbing veins decay,
My frenzied visions fade away.
A helpless injured wretch I die,
And something tells me in thine eye,
That thou wert mine avenger born.—
Seest thou this tress?—O! still I've worn
This little tress of yellow hair,
Through danger, frenzy, and despair!

It once was bright and clear as thine,
But blood and tears have dimm'd its shine.
I will not tell thee when 'twas shred,
Nor from what guiltless victim's head—
My brain would turn!—but it shall wave
Like plumage on thy helmet brave,
Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain,
And thou wilt bring it me again.—
I waver still.—O God! more bright
Let reason beam her parting light!—
O! by thy knighthood's honour'd sign,
And for thy life preserved by mine,
When thou shalt see a darksome man,
Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's Clan,
With tartans broad and shadowy plume
And hand of blood, and brow of gloom,
Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!—
They watch for thee by pass and fell . . .
Avoid the path . . . O God! . . . farewell."

XXVIII

A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James;
Fast pour'd his eyes at pity's claims,
And now, with mingled grief and ire,
He saw the murder'd maid expire.
"God, in my need, be my relief,
As I wreak this on yonder Chief!"
A lock from Blanche's tresses fair

He blended with her bridegroom's hair;
The mingled braid in blood he dyed,
And placed it on his bonnet-side:
"By Him whose word is truth! I swear,
No other favour will I wear,
Till this sad token I imbrue
In the best blood of Roderick Dhu!
—But hark! what means yon faint halloo?
The chase is up,—but they shall know,
The stag at bay's a dangerous foe."
Barr'd from the known but guarded way,
Through copse and cliffs Fitz-James must stray,
And oft must change his desperate track,
By stream and precipice turn'd back.
Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
From lack of food and loss of strength,
He couch'd him in a thicket hoar,
And thought his toils and perils o'er:—
"Of all my rash adventures past,
This frantic feat must prove the last!
Who e'er so mad but might have guess'd,
That all this Highland hornet's nest
Would muster up in swarms so soon
As e'er they heard of bands at Doune?—
Like bloodhounds now they search me out,—
Hark, to the whistle and the shout!—
If further through the wilds I go,
I only fall upon the foe:
I'll couch me here till evening grey,
Then darkling try my dangerous way."

XXIX

The shades of eve come slowly down,
The woods are wrapped in deeper brown,
The owl awakens from her dell,
The fox is heard upon the fell;
Enough remains of glimmering light
To guide the wanderer's steps aright,
Yet not enough from far to show
His figure to the watchful foe.
With cautious step, and ear awake,
He climbs the crag and threads the brake;
And not the summer solstice, there,
Tempered the midnight mountain air,
But every breeze, that swept the wold,
Benumb'd his drenched limbs with cold.
In dread, in danger, and alone,
Famish'd and chill'd, through ways unknown,
Tangled and steep, he journey'd on;
Till, as a rock's huge point he turn'd,
A watch-fire close before him burn'd.

XXX

Beside its embers red and clear,
Bask'd, in his plaid, a mountaineer;
And up he sprung with sword in hand,—
"Thy name and purpose! Saxon, stand!"
"A stranger." "What dost thou require?"—
"Rest and a guide, and food and fire.

My life's beset, my path is lost,
The gale has chill'd my limbs with frost."—
"Art thou a friend to Roderick?" "No."
"Thou darest not call thyself a foe?"
"I dare! to him and all the band
He brings to aid his murderous hand."—
"Bold words!—but, though the beast of game
The privilege of chase may claim,
Though space and law the stag we lend,
Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend,
Who ever reck'd, where, how, or when,
The prowling fox was trapp'd or slain?
Thus treacherous scouts,—yet sure they lie,
Who say thou camest a secret spy!"—
"They do, by heaven!—Come Roderick Dhu,
And of his clan the boldest two,
And let me but till morning rest,
I write the falsehood on their crest."
"If by the blaze I mark aright,
Thou bear'st the belt and spur of Knight."
"Then by these tokens may'st thou know
Each proud oppressor's mortal foe."—
"Enough, enough; sit down and share
A soldier's couch, a soldier's fare."

XXXI

He gave him of his Highland cheer,
The harden'd flesh of mountain deer;
Dry fuel on the fire he laid,
And bade the Saxon share his plaid.

He tended him like welcome guest,
Then thus his further speech address'd:—
"Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
A clansman born, a kinsman true;
Each word against his honour spoke,
Demands of me avenging stroke;
Yet more,—upon thy fate, 'tis said,
A mighty augury is laid.
It rests with me to wind my horn,—
Thou art with numbers overborne;
It rests with me, here, brand to brand,
Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
But, not for clan, nor kindred's cause,
Will I depart from honour's laws;
To assail a wearied man were shame,
And stranger is a holy name;
Guidance and rest, and food and fire,
In vain he never must require.
Then rest thee here till dawn of day;
Myself will guide thee on the way,
O'er stock and stone, through watch and ward,
Till past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard,
As far as Coilantogle's ford;
From thence thy warrant is thy sword."
"I take thy courtesy, by heaven,
As freely as 'tis nobly given!"
"Well, rest thee; for the bittern's cry
Sings us the lake's wild lullaby."
With that he shook the gather'd heath,
And spread his plaid upon the wreath;

And the brave foemen, side by side,
Lay peaceful down like brothers tried,
And slept until the dawning beam
Purpled the mountain and the stream.

CANTO FIFTH

THE COMBAT

I

Fair as the earliest beam of eastern light,
When first, by the bewilder'd pilgrim spied,
It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
And lights the fearful path on mountain side;—
Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of War.

II

That early beam, so fair and sheen,
Was twinkling through the hazel screen,
When, rousing at its glimmer red,
The warriors left their lowly bed,
Look'd out upon the dappled sky,
Mutter'd their soldier matins by,
And then awaked their fire, to steal,
As short and rude, their soldier meal.

That o'er, the Gael around him threw
His graceful plaid of varied hue,
And, true to promise, led the way,
By thicket green and mountain grey.
A wildering path!—they winded now
Along the precipice's brow,
Commanding the rich scenes beneath,
The windings of the Forth and Teith,
And all the vales between that lie,
Till Stirling's turrets melt in sky;
Then, sunk in copse, their farthest glance
Gain'd not the length of horseman's lance.
'Twas oft so steep, the foot was fain
Assistance from the hand to gain;
So tangled oft, that, bursting through,
Each hawthorn shed her showers of dew,—
That diamond dew, so pure and clear,
It rivals all but Beauty's tear!

III

At length they came where, stern and steep,
The hill sinks down upon the deep.
Here Vennachar in silver flows,
There, ridge on ridge, Benledi rose;
Ever the hollow path twined on,
Beneath steep bank and threatening stone;
An hundred men might hold the post
With hardihood against a host.

The rugged mountain's scanty cloak
Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak,
With shingles bare, and cliffs between,
And patches bright of bracken green,
And heather black, that waved so high,
It held the copse in rivalry.
But where the lake slept deep and still,
Dank osiers fringed the swamp and hill;
And oft both path and hill were torn,
Where wintry torrents down had borne,
And heap'd upon the cumber'd land
Its wreck of gravel, rocks, and sand.
So toilsome was the road to trace,
The guide, abating of his pace,
Led slowly through the pass's jaws,
And ask'd Fitz-James, by what strange cause
He sought these wilds? traversed by few,
Without a pass from Roderick Dhu.

IV

"Brave Gael, my pass, in danger tried,
Hangs in my belt, and by my side;
Yet, sooth to tell," the Saxon said,
"I dreamt not now to claim its aid.
When here, but three days since, I came,
Bewilder'd in pursuit of game,
All seem'd as peaceful and as still,
As the mist slumbering on yon hill;

Thy dangerous Chief was then afar,
Nor soon expected back from war.
Thus said, at least, my mountain-guide,
Though deep perchance the villain lied."—
"Yet why a second venture try?"—
"A warrior thou, and ask me why!—
Moves our free course by such fix'd cause,
As gives the poor mechanic laws?
Enough, I sought to drive away
The lazy hours of peaceful day;
Slight cause will then suffice to guide
A Knight's free footsteps far and wide,—
A falcon flown, a greyhound stray'd,
The merry glance of mountain maid:
Or, if a path be dangerous known,
The danger's self is lure alone."—

V

"Thy secret keep, I urge thee not;—
Yet, ere again ye sought this spot,
Say, heard ye nought of Lowland war,
Against Clan-Alpine, raised by Mar?"
—"No, by my word;—of bands prepared
To guard King James's sports I heard;
Nor doubt I aught, but, when they hear
This muster of the mountaineer,
Their pennons will abroad be flung,
Which else in Doune had peaceful hung."—

"Free be they flung!—for we were loth
Their silken folds should feast the moth.
Free be they flung!—as free shall wave
Clan-Alpine's pine in banner brave.
But, Stranger, peaceful since you came,
Bewilder'd in the mountain game,
Whence the bold boast by which you show
Vich-Alpine's vow'd and mortal foe?"—
"Warrior, but yester-morn, I knew
Nought of thy Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Save as an outlaw'd desperate man,
The chief of a rebellious clan,
Who, in the Regent's court and sight,
With ruffian dagger stabb'd a knight:
Yet this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart."

VI

Wrothful at such arraignment foul,
Dark lower'd the clansman's sable scowl.
A space he paused, then sternly said,
"And heard'st thou why he drew his blade?
Heard'st thou that shameful word and blow
Brought Roderick's vengeance on his foe?
What reck'd the Chieftain if he stood
On Highland heath, or Holy-Rood?
He rights such wrong where it is given,
If it were in the court of heaven."—

"Still was it outrage;—yet, 'tis true,
Not then claim'd sovereignty his due;
While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrow'd truncheon of command,
The young King, mew'd in Stirling tower,
Was stranger to respect and power.
But then, thy Chieftain's robber life!—
Winning mean prey by causeless strife,
Wrenching from ruin'd Lowland swain
His herds and harvest reared in vain.—
Methinks a soul, like thine, should scorn
The spoils from such foul foray borne."

VII

The Gael beheld him grim the while,
And answer'd with disdainful smile,—
"Saxon, from yonder mountain high,
I mark'd thee send delighted eye,
Far to the south and east, where lay,
Extended in succession gay,
Deep waving fields and pastures green,
With gentle slopes and groves between:—
These fertile plains, that soften'd vale,
Were once the birthright of the Gael;
The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers reft the land.
Where dwell we now! See, rudely swell
Crag over crag, and fell o'er fell.

Ask we this savage hill we tread,
For fatten'd steer or household bread;
Ask we for flocks these shingles dry,
And well the mountain might reply,—
'To you, as to your sires of yore,
Belong the target and claymore!
I give you shelter in my breast,
Your own good blades must win the rest.'
Pent in this fortress of the North,
Think'st thou we will not sally forth,
To spoil the spoiler as we may,
And from the robber rend the prey?
Ay, by my soul!—While on yon plain
The Saxon rears one shock of grain;
While, of ten thousand herds, there strays
But one along yon river's maze,—
The Gael, of plain and river heir,
Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share.
Where live the mountain Chiefs who hold
That plundering Lowland field and fold
Is aught but retribution true?
Seek other cause 'gainst Roderick Dhu.''—

VIII

Answer'd Fitz-James,—"And, if I sought,
Think'st thou no other could be brought?
What deem ye of my path waylaid?
My life given o'er to ambuscade?"—
"As of a meed to rashness due:
Hadst thou sent warning fair and true,—

I seek my hound, or falcon stray'd,
I seek, good faith, a Highland maid,—
Free hadst thou been to come and go;
But secret path marks secret foe.
Nor yet, for this, even as a spy,
Hadst thou, unheard, been doom'd to die,
Save to fulfil an augury."—
"Well, let it pass; nor will I now
Fresh cause of enmity avow,
To chafe thy mood and cloud thy brow.
Enough, I am by promise tied
To match me with this man of pride:
Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen
In peace; but when I come agen,
I come with banner, brand, and bow,
As leader seeks his mortal foe.
For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,
As I, until before me stand
This rebel Chieftain and his band!"

IX

"Have, then, thy wish!"—He whistled shrill,
And he was answer'd from the hill;
Wild as the scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew.
Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets and spears and bended bows;
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;

From shingles grey their lances start,
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow-wand
Are bristling into axe and brand,
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior arm'd for strife.
That whistle garrison'd the glen
At once with full five hundred men,
As if the yawning hill to heaven
A subterranean host had given.
Watching their leader's beck and will,
All silent there they stood, and still.
Like the loose crags whose threatening mass
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,
As if an infant's touch could urge
Their headlong passage down the verge,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain-side they hung.
The Mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fix'd his eye and sable brow
Full on Fitz-James—"How say'st thou now?
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu!"

X

Fitz-James was brave:—Though to his heart
The life-blood thrill'd with sudden start,
He mann'd himself with dauntless air,
Return'd the Chief his haughty stare,

His back against a rock he bore,
And firmly placed his foot before:—
"Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I."
Sir Roderick mark'd—and in his eyes
Respect was mingled with surprise,
And the stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel.
Short space he stood—then waved his hand:
Down sunk the disappearing band;
Each warrior vanish'd where he stood,
In broom or bracken, heath or wood;
Sunk brand and spear and bended bow,
In osiers pale and copses low;
It seemed as if their mother Earth
Had swallow'd up her warlike birth.
The wind's last breath had toss'd in air,
Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair,—
The next but swept a lone hill-side,
Where heath and fern were waving wide:
The sun's last glance was glinted back,
From spear and glaive, from targe and jack,—
The next, all unreflected, shone
On bracken green, and cold grey stone.

XI

Fitz-James look'd round—yet scarce believed
The witness that his sight received;
Such apparition well might seem
Delusion of a dreadful dream.

Sir Roderick in suspense he eyed,
And to his look the Chief replied,
"Fear nought—nay, that I need not say—
But—doubt not aught from mine array.
Thou art my guest;—I pledged my word
As far as Coilantogle ford:
Nor would I call a clansman's brand
For aid against one valiant hand,
Though on our strife lay every vale
Rent by the Saxon from the Gael.
So move we on;—I only meant
To show the reed on which you leant,
Deeming this path you might pursue
Without a pass from Roderick Dhu."
They moved:—I said Fitz-James was brave,
As ever knight that belted glaive;
Yet dare not say, that now his blood
Kept on its wont and temper'd flood,
As, following Roderick's stride, he drew
That seeming lonesome pathway through,
Which yet, by fearful proof, was rife
With lances, that, to take his life,
Waited but signal from a guide,
So late dishonour'd and defied.
Ever, by stealth, his eye sought round
The vanish'd guardians of the ground,
And still, from copse and heather deep,
Fancy saw spear and broadsword peep,
And in the plover's shrilly strain,
The signal whistle heard again.

Nor breathed he free till far behind
The pass was left; for then they wind
Along a wide and level green,
Where neither tree nor tuft was seen,
Nor rush nor bush of broom was near,
To hide a bonnet or a spear.

XII

The Chief in silence strode before,
And reached that torrent's sounding shore,
Which, daughter of three mighty lakes,
From Vennachar in silver breaks,
Sweeps through the plain, and ceaseless mines
On Bochastle the mouldering lines,
Where Rome, the Empress of the world,
Of yore her eagle wings unfurl'd.
And here his course the Chieftain staid,
Threw down his target and his plaid,
And to the Lowland warrior said—
"Bold Saxon! to his promise just,
Vich-Alpine has discharged his trust.
This murderous Chief, this ruthless man,
This head of a rebellious clan,
Hath led thee safe, through watch and ward,
Far past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard.
Now, man to man, and steel to steel,
A Chieftain's vengeance thou shalt feel.
See, here, all vantageless I stand,
Arm'd, like thyself, with single brand:

For this is Coilantogle ford,
And thou must keep thee with thy sword.'

XIII

The Saxon paused:—"I ne'er delay'd,
When foeman bade me draw my blade;
Nay more, brave Chief, I vow'd thy death:
Yet sure thy fair and generous faith,
And my deep debt for life preserved,
A better meed have well deserved:
Can nought but blood our feud atone?
Are there no means?"—"No, Stranger, none!
And hear,—to fire thy flagging zeal,—
The Saxon cause rests on thy steel;
For thus spoke Fate, by prophet bred
Between the living and the dead;
'Who spills the foremost foeman's life,
His party conquers in the strife.'"
"Then, by my word," the Saxon said,
"The riddle is already read.
Seek yonder brake beneath the cliff,—
There lies Red Murdoch, stark and stiff.
Thus Fate has solved her prophecy,
Then yield to Fate, and not to me.
To James, at Stirling, let us go,
When, if thou wilt be still his foe,
Or if the King shall not agree
To grant thee grace and favour free,
I plight mine honour, oath, and word,
That, to thy native strengths restored,

With each advantage shalt thou stand,
That aids thee now to guard thy land."

XIV

Dark lightning flash'd from Roderick's eye—
"Soars thy presumption, then, so high,
Because a wretched kern ye slew,
Homage to name to Roderick Dhu?
He yields not, he, to man nor Fate!
Thou add'st but fuel to my hate·—
My clansman's blood demands revenge.
Not yet prepared?—By heaven, I change
My thought, and hold thy valour light
As that of some vain carpet knight,
Who ill deserved my courteous care,
And whose best boast is but to wear
A braid of his fair lady's hair."—
"I thank thee, Roderick, for the word!
It nerves my heart, it steels my sword;
For I have sworn this braid to stain
In the best blood that warms thy vein.
Now, truce, farewell! and, ruth, begone!—
Yet think not that by thee alone,
Proud Chief! can courtesy be shown;
Though not from copse, or heath, or cairn,
Start at my whistle clansmen stern,
Of this small horn one feeble blast
Would fearful odds against thee cast.
But fear not—doubt not—which thou wilt—
We try this quarrel hilt to hilt."—

Then each at once his falchion drew,
Each on the ground his scabbard threw,
Each look'd to sun, and stream, and plain,
As what they ne'er might see again;
Then foot, and point, and eye opposed,
In dubious strife they darkly closed.

XV

Ill fared it then with Roderick Dhu,
That on the field his targe he threw,
Whose brazen studs and tough bull-hide
Had death so often dash'd aside;
For, train'd abroad his arms to wield,
Fitz-James's blade was sword and shield.
He practised every pass and ward,
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard;
While less expert, though stronger far,
The Gael maintain'd unequal war.
Three times in closing strife they stood,
And thrice the Saxon blade drank blood;
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.
Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,
And shower'd his blows like wintry rain;
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,
Against the winter shower is proof,
The foe, invulnerable still,
Foil'd his wild rage by steady skill;

Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand,
And backward borne upon the lea,
Brought the proud Chieftain to his knee.

XVI

"Now, yield thee, or by Him who made
The world, thy heart's blood dyes my blade!"—
"Thy threats, thy mercy, I defy!
Let recreant yield, who fears to die."
—Like adder darting from his coil,
Like wolf that dashes through the toil,
Like mountain-cat who guards her young,
Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprung;
Received, but reck'd not of a wound,
And lock'd his arms his foeman round.—
Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own!
No maiden's hand is round thee thrown!
That desperate grasp thy frame might feel,
Through bars of brass and triple steel!—
They tug, they strain! down, down they go,
The Gael above, Fitz-James below.
The Chieftain's gripe his throat compress'd,
His knee was planted in his breast;
His clotted locks he backward threw,
Across his brow his hand he drew,
From blood and mist to clear his sight,
Then gleam'd aloft his dagger bright!—

—But hate and fury ill supplied
The stream of life's exhausted tide,
And all too late the advantage came,
To turn the odds of deadly game;
For, while the dagger gleam'd on high,
Reel'd soul and sense, reel'd brain and eye
Down came the blow! but in the heath
The erring blade found bloodless sheath.
The struggling foe may now unclasp
The fainting Chief's relaxing grasp;
Unwounded from the dreadful close,
But breathless all, Fitz-James arose.

XVII

He falter'd thanks to Heaven for life,
Redeem'd, unhoped, from desperate strife;
Next on his foe his look he cast,
Whose every gasp appear'd his last;
In Roderick's gore he dipped the braid,—
"Poor Blanche! thy wrongs are dearly paid:
Yet with thy foe must die, or live,
The praise that faith and valour give."
With that he blew a bugle-note,
Undid the collar from his throat,
Unbonneted, and by the wave
Sate down his brow and hands to lave.
Then faint afar are heard the feet
Of rushing steeds in gallop fleet;
The sounds increase, and now are seen
Four mounted squires in Lincoln green;

Two who bear lance, and two who lead,
By loosen'd rein, a saddled steed;
Each onward held his headlong course,
And by Fitz-James rein'd up his horse,—
With wonder view'd the bloody spot—
—"Exclaim not, gallants! question not.—
You, Herbert and Luffness, alight,
And bind the wounds of yonder knight;
Let the grey palfrey bear his weight,
We destined for a fairer freight,
And bring him on to Stirling straight;
I will before at better speed,
To seek fresh horse and fitting weed.
The sun rides high;—I must be boune,
To see the archer-game at noon;
But lightly Bayard clears the lea.—
De Vaux and Herries, follow me.

XVIII

"Stand, Bayard, stand!"—the steed obey'd,
With arching neck and bended head,
And glancing eye and quivering ear
As if he loved his lord to hear.
No foot Fitz-James in stirrup staid,
No grasp upon the saddle laid,
But wreath'd his left hand in the mane,
And lightly bounded from the plain,
Turn'd on the horse his armed heel,
And stirr'd his courage with the steel.

Bounded the fiery steed in air,
The rider sate erect and fair,
Then like a bolt from steel crossbow
Forth launch'd, along the plain they go.
They dash'd that rapid torrent through,
And up Carhonie's hill they flew;
Still at the gallop prick'd the Knight,
His merry-men follow'd as they might.
Along thy banks, swift Teith! they ride,
And in the race they mock thy tide;
Torry and Lendrick now are past,
And Deanstown lies behind them cast;
They rise, the banner'd towers of Doune,
They sink in distant woodland soon;
Blair-Drummond sees the hoofs strike fire,
They sweep like breeze through Ochtertyre;
They mark just glance and disappear
The lofty brow of ancient Kier;
They bathe their courser's sweltering sides,
Dark Forth! amid thy sluggish tides,
And on the opposing shore take ground,
With plash, with scramble, and with bound.
Right-hand they leave thy cliffs, Craig-Forth!
And soon the bulwark of the North,
Grey Stirling, with her towers and town,
Upon their fleet career look'd down.

XIX

As up the flinty path they strain'd
Sudden his steed the leader rein'd;

A signal to his squire he flung,
Who instant to his stirrup sprung:—
"Seest thou, De Vaux, yon woodsman grey,
Who town-ward holds the rocky way,
Of stature tall and poor array?
Mark'st thou the firm, yet active stride,
With which he scales the mountain-side?
Know'st thou from whence he comes, or whom?"
"No, by my word;—a burly groom
He seems, who in the field or chase
A baron's train would nobly grace."—
"Out, out, De Vaux! can fear supply,
And jealousy, no sharper eye?
Afar, ere to the hill he drew,
That stately form and step I knew;
Like form in Scotland is not seen,
Treads not such step on Scottish green.
'Tis James of Douglas, by Saint Serle!
The uncle of the banish'd Earl.
Away, away, to court, to show
The near approach of dreaded foe:
The King must stand upon his guard;
Douglas and he must meet prepared."
Then right-hand wheel'd their steeds, and straight
They won the castle's postern gate.

XX

The Douglas, who had bent his way
From Cambus-Kenneth's abbey grey,

Now, as he climb'd the rocky shelf,
Held sad communion with himself:—
"Yes! all is true my fears could frame;
A prisoner lies the noble Græme,
And fiery Roderick soon will feel
The vengeance of the royal steel.
I, only I, can ward their fate,—
God grant the ransom come not late!
The Abbess hath her promise given,
My child shall be the bride of heaven;—
—Be pardon'd one repining tear!
For He, who gave her, knows how dear,
How excellent!—but that is by,
And now my business is—to die.
—Ye towers! within whose circuit dread
A Douglas by his sovereign bled;
And thou, O sad and fatal mound!
That oft has heard the death-axe sound,
As on the noblest of the land
Fell the stern headsman's bloody hand,—
The dungeon, block, and nameless tomb
Prepare—for Douglas seeks his doom!
—But hark! what blithe and jolly peal
Makes the Franciscan steeple reel?
And see! upon the crowded street,
In motley groups what masquers meet!
Banner and pageant, pipe and drum,
And merry morrice-dancers come.
I guess, by all this quaint array,
The burghers hold their sports to-day.

James will be there; he loves such show,
Where the good yeoman bends his bow,
And the tough wrestler foils his foe,
As well as where, in proud career,
The high-born tilter shivers spear.
I'll follow to the Castle-park,
And play my prize;—King James shall mark,
If age has tamed these sinews stark,
Whose force so oft, in happier days,
His boyish wonder loved to praise."

XXI

The Castle gates were open flung,
The quivering drawbridge rock'd and rung,
And echo'd loud the flinty street
Beneath the coursers' clattering feet,
As slowly down the steep descent
Fair Scotland's King and nobles went,
While all along the crowded way
Was jubilee and loud huzza.
And ever James was bending low,
To his white jennet's saddle-bow,
Doffing his cap to city dame,
Who smiled and blush'd for pride and shame.
And well the simperer might be vain,—
He chose the fairest of the train.
Gravely he greets each city sire,
Commends each pageant's quaint attire,

Gives to the dancers thanks aloud,
And smiles and nods upon the crowd,
Who rend the heavens with their acclaims,
"Long live the Commons' King, King James!"
Behind the King throng'd peer and knight,
And noble dame and damsel bright,
Whose fiery steeds ill brook'd the stay
Of the steep street and crowded way.
—But in the train you might discern
Dark lowering brow and visage stern;
There nobles mourn'd their pride restrain'd,
And the mean burgher's joys disdain'd;
And chiefs, who, hostage for their clan,
Were each from home a banish'd man,
There thought upon their own grey tower,
Their waving woods, their feudal power,
And deem'd themselves a shameful part
Of pageant which they cursed in heart.

XXII

Now, in the Castle-park, drew out
Their chequer'd bands the joyous rout.
There morricers, with bell at heel,
And blade in hand, their mazes wheel;
But chief, beside the butts, there stand
Bold Robin Hood and all his band,—
Friar Tuck with quarterstaff and cowl,
Old Scathelocke with his surly scowl,

Maid Marion, fair as ivory bone,
Scarlet, and Mutch, and Little John;
Their bugles challenge all that will,
In archery to prove their skill.
The Douglas bent a bow of might,—
His first shaft centred in the white,
And when in turn he shot again,
His second split the first in twain.
From the King's hand must Douglas take
A silver dart, the archer's stake;
Fondly he watch'd, with watery eye,
Some answering glance of sympathy,—
No kind emotion made reply!
Indifferent as to archer wight,
The monarch gave the arrow bright.

XXIII

Now, clear the ring! for, hand to hand,
The manly wrestlers take their stand.
Two o'er the rest superior rose,
And proud demanded mightier foes,
Nor call'd in vain; for Douglas came.
—For life is Hugh of Larbert lame;
Scarce better John of Alloa's fare,
Whom senseless home his comrades bear.
Prize of the wrestling match, the King
To Douglas gave a golden ring,
While coldly glanced his eye of blue,
As frozen drop of wintry dew.

Douglas would speak, but in his breast
His struggling soul his words suppress'd;
Indignant then he turn'd him where
Their arms the brawny yeomen bare,
To hurl the massive bar in air.
When each his utmost strength had shown,
The Douglas rent an earth-fast stone
From its deep bed, then heav'd it high,
And sent the fragment through the sky,
A rood beyond the farthest mark;—
And still in Stirling's royal park,
The grey-hair'd sires, who know the past,
To strangers point the Douglas-cast,
And moralize on the decay
Of Scottish strength in modern day.

XXIV

The vale with loud applauses rang,
The Ladies' Rock sent back the clang.
The King, with look unmoved, bestow'd
A purse well-fill'd with pieces broad.
Indignant smiled the Douglas proud,
And threw the gold among the crowd,
Who now, with anxious wonder, scan,
And sharper glance, the dark grey man;
Till whispers rose among the throng,
That heart so free, and hand so strong,
Must to the Douglas blood belong,

The old men mark'd and shook the head,
To see his hair with silver spread,
And wink'd aside, and told each son,
Of feats upon the English done,
Ere Douglas of the stalwart hand
Was exiled from his native land.
The women praised his stately form,
Though wreck'd by many a winter's storm;
The youth with awe and wonder saw
His strength surpassing Nature's law.
Thus judged, as is their wont, the crowd,
Till murmur rose to clamours loud.
But not a glance from that proud ring
Of peers who circled round the King,
With Douglas held communion kind,
Or call'd the banish'd man to mind;
No, not from those who, at the chase,
Once held his side the honour'd place,
Begirt his board, and, in the field,
Found safety underneath his shield;
For he, whom royal eyes disown,
When was his form to courtiers known!

XXV

The Monarch saw the gambols flag,
And bade let loose a gallant stag,
Whose pride, the holiday to crown,
Two favourite greyhounds should pull down,

That venison free, and Bordeaux wine,
Might serve the archery to dine.
But Lufra,—whom from Douglas' side
Nor bribe nor threat could e'er divide,
The fleetest hound in all the North,—
Brave Lufra saw, and darted forth.
She left the royal hounds mid-way,
And dashing on the antler'd prey,
Sunk her sharp muzzle in his flank,
And deep the flowing life-blood drank.
The King's stout huntsman saw the sport
By strange intruder broken short,
Came up, and with his leash unbound,
In anger struck the noble hound.
—The Douglas had endured, that morn,
The King's cold look, the nobles' scorn,
And last, and worst to spirit proud,
Had borne the pity of the crowd;
But Lufra had been fondly bred,
To share his board, to watch his bed,
And oft would Ellen, Lufra's neck
In maiden glee with garlands deck;
They were such playmates, that with name
Of Lufra, Ellen's image came.
His stifled wrath is brimming high,
In darken'd brow and flashing eye;
As waves before the bark divide,
The crowd gave way before his stride;
Needs but a buffet and no more,
The groom lies senseless in his gore.

Such blow no other hand could deal,
Though gauntleted in glove of steel.

XXVI

Then clamour'd loud the royal train,
And brandish'd swords and staves amain,
But stern the Baron's warning—"Back!
Back, on your lives, ye menial pack!
Beware the Douglas.—Yes! behold,
King James! the Douglas, doom'd of old,
And vainly sought for near and far,
A victim to atone the war,
A willing victim, now attends,
Nor craves thy grace but for his friends."—
"Thus is my clemency repaid?
Presumptuous Lord!" the monarch said;
"Of thy mis-proud ambitious clan,
Thou, James of Bothwell, wert the man,
The only man, in whom a foe
My woman-mercy would not know:
But shall a Monarch's presence brook
Injurious blow, and haughty look?—
What ho! the Captain of our Guard!
Give the offender fitting ward.—
Break off the sports!"—for tumult rose,
And yeomen 'gan to bend their bows,—
"Break off the sports!" he said, and frown'd,
"And bid our horsemen clear the ground."

XXVII

Then uproar wild and misarray
Marr'd the fair form of festal day.
The horsemen prick'd among the crowd,
Repell'd by threats and insult loud;
To earth are borne the old and weak,
The timorous fly, the women shriek;
With flint, with shaft, with staff, with bar,
The hardier urge tumultuous war.
At once round Douglas darkly sweep
The royal spears in circle deep,
And slowly scale the pathway steep;
While on the rear in thunder pour
The rabble with disorder'd roar.
With grief the noble Douglas saw
The Commons rise against the law,
And to the leading soldier said,—
"Sir John of Hyndford! 'twas my blade,
That knighthood on thy shoulder laid;
For that good deed, permit me then
A word with these misguided men.

XXVIII

"Hear, gentle friends! ere yet for me,
Ye break the bands of fealty.
My life, my honour, and my cause,
I tender free to Scotland's laws.
Are these so weak as must require
The aid of your misguided ire?

Or, if I suffer causeless wrong,
Is then my selfish rage so strong,
My sense of public weal so low,
That, for mean vengeance on a foe,
Those cords of love I should unbind,
Which knit my country and my kind?
Oh no! Believe, in yonder tower
It will not soothe my captive hour,
To know those spears our foes should dread,
For me in kindred gore are red;
To know, in fruitless brawl begun,
For me, that mother wails her son;
For me, that widow's mate expires;
For me, that orphans weep their sires;
That patriots mourn insulted laws,
And curse the Douglas for the cause.
O let your patience ward such ill,
And keep your right to love me still!"

XXIX

The crowd's wild fury sunk again
In tears, as tempests melt in rain.
With lifted hands and eyes, they pray'd
For blessings on his generous head,
Who for his country felt alone,
And prized her blood beyond his own.
Old men, upon the verge of life,
Bless'd him who stay'd the civil strife;

And mothers held their babes on high,
The self-devoted Chief to spy,
Triumphant over wrongs and ire,
To whom the prattlers owed a sire:
Even the rough soldier's heart was moved;
As if behind some bier beloved,
With trailing arms and drooping head,
The Douglas up the hill he led,
And at the Castle's battled verge,
With sighs resign'd his honour'd charge.

XXX

The offended Monarch rode apart,
With bitter thought and swelling heart,
And would not now vouchsafe again
Through Stirling streets to lead his train.
"O Lennox, who would wish to rule
This changeling crowd, this common fool?
Hear'st thou," he said, "the loud acclaim,
With which they shout the Douglas name?
With like acclaim, the vulgar throat
Strain'd for King James their morning note;
With like acclaim they hail'd the day
When first I broke the Douglas' sway;
And like acclaim would Douglas greet,
If he could hurl me from my seat.
Who o'er the herd would wish to reign,
Fantastic, fickle, fierce, and vain!

Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
And fickle as a changeful dream;
Fantastic as a woman's mood,
And fierce as Frenzy's fever'd blood.
Thou many-headed monster-thing,
O who could wish to be thy king!

XXXI

"But soft! what messenger of speed
Spurs hitherward his panting steed?
I guess his cognizance afar—
What from our cousin, John of Mar?"—
"He prays, my liege, your sports keep bound
Within the safe and guarded ground:
For some foul purpose yet unknown,—
Most sure for evil to the throne,—
The outlaw'd Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Has summon'd his rebellious crew;
'Tis said, in James of Bothwell's aid
These loose banditti stand array'd.
The Earl of Mar, this morn, from Doune,
To break their muster march'd, and soon
Your grace will hear of battle fought;
But earnestly the Earl besought,
Till for such danger he provide,
With scanty train you will not ride."

XXXII

"Thou warn'st me I have done amiss,—
I should have earlier look'd to this:

I lost it in this bustling day.
—Retrace with speed thy former way;
Spare not for spoiling of thy steed,
The best of mine shall be thy meed.
Say to our faithful Lord of Mar,
We do forbid the intended war:
Roderick, this morn, in single fight,
Was made our prisoner by a knight;
And Douglas hath himself and cause
Submitted to our kingdom's laws.
The tidings of their leaders lost
Will soon dissolve the mountain host,
Nor would we that the vulgar feel
For their Chief's crimes, avenging steel.
Bear Mar our message, Braco; fly!"—
He turn'd his steed,—"My liege, I hie,—
Yet, ere I cross this lily lawn,
I fear the broadswords will be drawn."
The turf the flying courser spurn'd,
And to his towers the King return'd.

XXXIII

Ill with King James's mood that day,
Suited gay feast and minstrel lay;
Soon were dismiss'd the courtly throng,
And soon cut short the festal song.
Nor less upon the sadden'd town
The evening sunk in sorrow down.

The burghers spoke of civil jar,
Of rumour'd feuds and mountain war,
Of Moray, Mar, and Roderick Dhu,
All up in arms:—the Douglas too,
They mourn'd him pent within the hold,
"Where stout Earl William was of old."
And there his word the speaker staid,
And finger on his lip he laid,
Or pointed to his dagger blade.
But jaded horsemen, from the west,
At evening to the Castle press'd;
And busy talkers said they bore
Tidings of fight on Katrine's shore;
At noon the deadly fray begun,
And lasted till the set of sun.
Thus giddy rumour shook the town,
Till closed the Night her pennons brown.

CANTO SIXTH

THE GUARD-ROOM

I

The sun, awakening, through the smoky air
Of the dark city casts a sullen glance,
Rousing each caitiff to his task of care,
Of sinful man the sad inheritance;
Summoning revellers from the lagging dance,
Scaring the prowling robber to his den;
Gilding on battled tower the warder's lance,
And warning student pale to leave his pen,
And yield his drowsy eyes to the kind nurse of men.

What various scenes, and, O! what scenes of woe,
Are witness'd by that red and struggling beam!
The fever'd patient, from his pallet low,
Through crowded hospital beholds its stream;
The ruin'd maiden trembles at its gleam,
The debtor wakes to thought of gyve and jail,
The love-lorn wretch starts from tormenting dream;
The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail.

II

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang
With soldier-step and weapon-clang,
While drums, with rolling note, foretell
Relief to weary sentinel.
Through narrow loop and casement barr'd,
The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,
And, struggling with the smoky air,
Deaden'd the torches' yellow glare.
In comfortless alliance shone
The lights through arch of blacken'd stone,
And show'd wild shapes in garb of war,
Faces deform'd with beard and scar,
All haggard from the midnight watch,
And fever'd with the stern debauch;
For the oak table's massive board,
Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,
And beakers drain'd, and cups o'erthrown,
Show'd in what sport the night had flown.
Some, weary, snored on floor and bench;
Some labour'd still their thirst to quench;
Some, chill'd with watching, spread their hands
O'er the huge chimney's dying brands,
While round them, or beside them flung,
At every step their harness rung.

III

These drew not for their fields the sword,
Like tenants of a feudal lord,

Nor own'd the patriarchal claim
Of Chieftain in their leader's name;
Adventurers they, from far who roved,
To live by battle which they loved.
There the Italian's clouded face,
The swarthy Spaniard's there you trace;
The mountain-loving Switzer there
More freely breathed in mountain-air;
The Fleming there despised the soil,
That paid so ill the labourer's toil;
Their rolls show'd French and German name;
And merry England's exiles came,
To share, with ill-conceal'd disdain,
Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.
All brave in arms, well train'd to wield
The heavy halberd, brand, and shield;
In camps licentious, wild, and bold;
In pillage fierce and uncontroll'd;
And now, by holytide and feast,
From rules of discipline released.

IV

They held debate of bloody fray,
Fought 'twixt Loch Katrine and Achray.
Fierce was their speech, and, 'mid their words,
Their hands oft grappled to their swords;
Nor sunk their tone to spare the ear
Of wounded comrades groaning near,

Whose mangled limbs, and bodies gored,
Bore token of the mountain sword,
Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard,
Their prayers and feverish wails were heard;
Sad burden to the ruffian joke,
And savage oath by fury spoke!—
At length up-started John of Brent,
A yeoman from the banks of Trent;
A stranger to respect or fear,
In peace a chaser of the deer,
In host a hardy mutineer,
But still the boldest of the crew,
When deed of danger was to do.
He grieved, that day, their games cut short,
And marr'd the dicer's brawling sport,
And shouted loud, "Renew the bowl!
And, while a merry catch I troll,
Let each the buxom chorus bear,
Like brethren of the brand and spear."

V

SOLDIER'S SONG

Our vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule
Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,
That there's wrath and despair in the jolly black-jack,
And the seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack;

Yet whoop, Barnaby! off with thy liquor,
Drink upsees out, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar he calls it damnation to sip
The ripe ruddy dew of a woman's dear lip,
Says, that Beelzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,
And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye;
Yet whoop, Jack! kiss Gillian the quicker,
Till she bloom like a rose, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar thus preaches—and why should he not?
For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot;
And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch,
Who infringe the domains of our good Mother Church.
Yet whoop, bully-boys! off with your liquor,
Sweet Marjorie's the word, and a fig for the vicar!

VI

The warder's challenge, heard without,
Staid in mid-roar the merry shout.
A soldier to the portal went,—
"Here is old Bertram, sirs, of Ghent;
And,—beat for jubilee the drum!
A maid and minstrel with him come."
Bertram, a Fleming, grey and scarr'd,
Was entering now the Court of Guard,
A harper with him, and in plaid
All muffled close, a mountain maid,

Who backward shrunk, to 'scape the view
Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.
"What news?" they roar'd:—"I only know,
From noon till eve we fought with foe,
As wild and as untameable
As the rude mountains where they dwell;
On both sides store of blood is lost,
Nor much success can either boast."—
"But whence thy captives, friend? such spoil
As theirs must needs reward thy toil.
Old dost thou wax, and wars grow sharp;
Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp!
Get thee an ape, and trudge the land,
The leader of a juggler band."—

VII

"No, comrade;—no such fortune mine.
After the fight these sought our line,
That aged harper and the girl,
And, having audience of the Earl,
Mar bade I should purvey them steed,
And bring them hitherward with speed.
Forbear your mirth and rude alarm,
For none shall do them shame or harm."—
"Hear ye his boast?" cried John of Brent,
Ever to strife and jangling bent;
"Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,
And yet the jealous niggard grudge
To pay the forester his fee?

I'll have my share, howe'er it be,
Despite of Moray, Mar, or thee."
Bertram his forward step withstood;
And, burning in his vengeful mood,
Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
Laid hand upon his dagger-knife;
But Ellen boldly stepp'd between,
And dropp'd at once the tartan screen:—
So, from his morning cloud, appears
The sun of May, through summer tears.
The savage soldiery, amazed,
As on descended angel gazed;
Even hardy Brent, abash'd and tamed,
Stood half admiring, half ashamed.

VIII

Boldly she spoke,—"Soldiers, attend!
My father was the soldier's friend;
Cheer'd him in camps, in marches led,
And with him in the battle bled.
Not from the valiant, or the strong,
Should exile's daughter suffer wrong."—
Answer'd De Brent, most forward still
In every feat or good or ill,—
"I shame me of the part I play'd:
And thou an outlaw's child, poor maid!
An outlaw I by forest laws,
And merry Needwood knows the cause.

Poor Rose,—if Rose be living now,"—
He wiped his iron eye and brow,—
"Must bear such age, I think, as thou.
Hear ye, my mates;—I go to call
The Captain of our watch to hall:
There lies my halberd on the floor;
And he that steps my halberd o'er,
To do the maid injurious part,
My shaft shall quiver in his heart!—
Beware loose speech, or jesting rough:
Ye all know John de Brent. Enough."

IX

Their Captain came, a gallant young,—
(Of Tullibardine's house he sprung,)
Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight;
Gay was his mien, his humour light,
And, though by courtesy controll'd,
Forward his speech, his bearing bold.
The high-born maiden ill could brook
The scanning of his curious look
And dauntless eye;—and yet, in sooth,
Young Lewis was a generous youth;
But Ellen's lovely face and mien,
Ill suited to the garb and scene,
Might lightly bear construction strange,
And give loose fancy scope to range.
"Welcome to Stirling towers, fair maid!
Come ye to seek a champion's aid,

On palfrey white, with harper hoar,
Like errant damosel of yore?
Does thy high quest a knight require,
Or may the venture suit a squire?"—
Her dark eye flash'd;—she paused and sigh'd,—
"O what have I to do with pride!—
—Through scenes of sorrow, shame, and strife,
A suppliant for a father's life,
I crave an audience of the King.
Behold, to back my suit, a ring,
The royal pledge of grateful claims,
Given by the Monarch to Fitz-James."

X

The signet-ring young Lewis took,
With deep respect and alter'd look;
And said,—"This ring our duties own;
And pardon, if to worth unknown,
In semblance mean obscurely veil'd,
Lady, in aught my folly fail'd.
Soon as the day flings wide his gates,
The King shall know what suitor waits.
Please you, meanwhile, in fitting bower
Repose you till his waking hour;
Female attendance shall obey
Your hest, for service or array.
Permit I marshal you the way."
But, ere she followed, with the grace
And open bounty of her race,

She bade her slender purse be shared
Among the soldiers of the guard.
The rest with thanks their guerdon took;
But Brent, with shy and awkward look,
On the reluctant maiden's hold
Forced bluntly back the proffer'd gold;—
"Forgive a haughty English heart,
And O forget its ruder part!
The vacant purse shall be my share,
Which in my barret-cap I'll bear.
Perchance, in jeopardy of war,
Where gayer crests may keep afar."
With thanks,—'twas all she could—the maid
His rugged courtesy repaid.

XI

When Ellen forth with Lewis went,
Allan made suit to John of Brent:—
"My lady safe, O let your grace
Give me to see my master's face!
His minstrel I,—to share his doom
Bound from the cradle to the tomb.
Tenth in descent, since first my sires
Waked for his noble house their lyres,
Nor one of all the race was known
But prized its weal above their own.
With the Chief's birth begins our care;
Our harp must soothe the infant heir,
Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace

His earliest feat of field or chase;
In peace, in war, our rank we keep,
We cheer his board, we soothe his sleep,
Nor leave him till we pour our verse,—
A doleful tribute!—o'er his hearse.
Then let me share his captive lot;
It is my right—deny it not!"—
"Little we reck," said John of Brent,
"We Southern men, of long descent;
Nor wot we how a name—a word—
Makes clansmen vassals to a lord:
Yet kind my noble landlord's part,—
God bless the house of Beaudesert!
And, but I loved to drive the deer,
More than to guide the labouring steer,
I had not dwelt an outcast here.
Come, good old Minstrel, follow me;
Thy Lord and Chieftain shalt thou see."

XII

Then, from a rusted iron hook,
A bunch of ponderous keys he took,
Lighted a torch, and Allan led
Through grated arch and passage dread.
Portals they pass'd, where, deep within,
Spoke prisoner's moan, and fetters' din;
Through rugged vaults, where, loosely stored,
Lay wheel, and axe, and headsman's sword,
And many an hideous engine grim,
For wrenching joint, and crushing limb,

By artist form'd, who deem'd it shame
And sin to give their work a name.
They halted at a low brow'd porch,
And Brent to Allan gave the torch,
While bolt and chain he backward roll'd,
And made the bar unhasp its hold.
They enter'd:—'twas a prison-room
Of stern security and gloom,
Yet not a dungeon; for the day
Through lofty gratings found its way,
And rude and antique garniture
Deck'd the sad walls and oaken floor;
Such as the rugged days of old
Deem'd fit for captive noble's hold.
"Here," said De Brent, "thou mayst remain
Till the Leech visit him again.
Strict is his charge, the warders tell,
To tend the noble prisoner well."
Retiring then the bolt he drew,
And the lock's murmurs growl'd anew.
Roused at the sound, from lowly bed
A captive feebly raised his head;
The wondering Minstrel look'd, and knew—
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu!
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,
They, erring, deem'd the Chief he sought.

XIII

As the tall ship, whose lofty prore
Shall never stem the billows more,

Deserted by her gallant band,
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—
So, on his couch, lay Roderick Dhu!
And oft his fever'd limbs he threw
In toss abrupt, as when her sides
Lie rocking in the advancing tides,
That shake her frame with ceaseless beat,
Yet cannot heave her from her seat;—
O! how unlike her course at sea!
Or his free step on hill and lea!—
Soon as the Minstrel he could scan,
—"What of thy lady?—of my clan?—
My mother?—Douglas?—tell me all?
Have they been ruin'd in my fall?
Ah, yes! or wherefore art thou here!
Yet speak,—speak boldly,—do not fear."—
(For Allan, who his mood well knew,
Was choked with grief and terror too.)
"Who fought—who fled?—Old man, be brief;—
Some might—for they had lost their Chief.
Who basely live?—who bravely died?"
"O, calm thee, Chief!" the Minstrel cried,
"Ellen is safe;"—"For that thank Heaven!"—
"And hopes are for the Douglas given;—
The Lady Margaret too is well;
And, for thy clan,—on field or fell,
Has never harp of minstrel told,
Of combat fought so true and bold.
Thy stately Pine is yet unbent,
Though many a goodly bough is rent."

XIV

The Chieftain rear'd his form on high,
And fever's fire was in his eye;
But ghastly pale, and livid streaks
Chequer'd his swarthy brow and cheeks.
—"Hark, Minstrel! I have heard thee play,
With measure bold, on festal day,
In yon lone isle, . . . again where ne'er
Shall harper play, or warrior hear! . . .
That stirring air that peals on high,
O'er Dermid's race our victory.—
Strike it!—and then, (for well thou canst,)
Free from thy minstrel spirit glanced.
Fling me the picture of the fight,
When met my clan the Saxon might.
I'll listen, till my fancy hears
The clang of swords, the crash of spears!
These grates, these walls, shall vanish then,
For the fair field of fighting men,
And my free spirit burst away,
As if it soar'd from battle fray."
The trembling Bard with awe obey'd,—
Slow on the harp his hand he laid;
But soon remembrance of the sight
He witness'd from the mountain's height,
With what old Bertram told at night,
Awaken'd the full power of song,
And bore him in career along;—

As shallop launch'd on river's tide,
That slow and fearful leaves the side,
But, when it feels the middle stream,
Drives downward swift as lightning's beam.

XV

BATTLE OF BEAL' AN DUINE

"The Minstrel came once more to view
The eastern ridge of Benvenue,
For ere he parted, he would say
Farewell to lovely Loch Achray—
Where shall he find in foreign land,
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!
There is no breeze upon the fern,
Nor ripple on the lake,
Upon her eyry nods the erne,
The deer has sought the brake;
The small birds will not sing aloud,
The springing trout lies still,
So darkly glooms yon thunder cloud,
That swathes, as with a purple shroud,
Benledi's distant hill.
Is it the thunder's solemn sound
That mutters deep and dread,
Or echoes from the groaning ground
The warrior's measured tread?
Is it the lightning's quivering glance
That on the thicket streams,
Or do they flash on spear and lance

The sun's retiring beams?
—I see the dagger-crest of Mar,
I see the Moray's silver star,
Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
That up the lake comes winding far!
To hero bound for battle-strife,
Or bard of martial lay,
'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array!

XVI

"Their light-arm'd archers far and near
Survey'd the tangled ground,
Their centre ranks, with pike and spear,
A twilight forest frown'd,
Their barbed horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crown'd.
No cymbal clash'd, no clarion rang,
Still were the pipe and drum;
Save heavy tread, and armour's clang,
The sullen march was dumb.
There breathed no wind their crests to shake,
Or wave their flags abroad;
Scarce the frail aspen seem'd to quake,
That shadow'd o'er their road.
Their vaward scouts no tidings bring,
Can rouse no lurking foe,
Nor spy a trace of living thing,
Save when they stirr'd the roe;

The host moves, like a deep-sea wave,
Where rise no rocks its pride to brave,
High-swelling, dark, and slow.
The lake is pass'd, and now they gain
A narrow and a broken plain,
Before the Trosachs' rugged jaws;
And here the horse and spearmen pause,
While, to explore the dangerous glen,
Dive through the pass the archer-men.

XVII

"At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell,
As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,
Had peal'd the banner-cry of hell!
Forth from the pass in tumult driven,
Like chaff before the wind of heaven,
The archery appear:
For life! for life! their plight they ply—
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,
And plaids and bonnets waving high,
And broadswords flashing to the sky,
Are maddening in the rear.
Onward they drive, in dreadful race,
Pursuers and pursued;
Before that tide of flight and chase,
How shall it keep its rooted place,
The spearmen's twilight wood?—

'Down, down,' cried Mar, 'your lances down!
Bear back both friend and foe!'—
Like reeds before the tempest's frown,
That serried grove of lances brown
At once lay levell'd low;
And closely shouldering side to side,
The bristling ranks the onset bide.—
'We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
As their Tinchel cows the game!
They come as fleet as forest deer,
We'll drive them back as tame.'—

XVIII

"Bearing before them, in their course,
The relics of the archer force,
Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,
Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.
Above the tide, each broadsword bright
Was brandishing like beam of light,
Each targe was dark below;
And with the ocean's mighty swing,
When heaving to the tempest's wing,
They hurl'd them on the foe.
I heard the lance's shivering crash,
As when the whirlwind rends the ash;
I heard the broadsword's deadly clang,
As if an hundred anvils rang!
But Moray wheel'd his rearward rank

Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank,
—'My banner-man, advance!
I see', he cried, 'their column shake.—
Now, gallants! for your ladies' sake,
Upon them with the lance!'—
The horsemen dash'd among the rout,
As deer break through the broom;
Their steeds are stout, their swords are out,
They soon make lightsome room.
Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne—
Where, where was Roderick then!
One blast upon his bugle-horn
Were worth a thousand men.
And refluent through the pass of fear
The battle's tide was pour'd;
Vanish'd the Saxon's struggling spear,
Vanish'd the mountain-sword.
As Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep,
Receives her roaring linn,
As the dark caverns of the deep
Suck the wild whirlpool in,
So did the deep and darksome pass
Devour the battle's mingled mass.
None linger now upon the plain,
Save those who ne'er shall fight again.

XIX

"Now westward rolls the battle's din,
That deep and doubling pass within,

—Minstrel, away! the work of fate
Is bearing on: its issue wait,
Where the rude Trosachs' dread defile
Opens on Katrine's lake and isle.—
Grey Benvenue I soon repass'd,
Loch Katrine lay beneath me cast.
The sun is set,—the clouds are met,
The lowering scowl of heaven
An inky hue of livid blue
To the deep lake has given;
Strange gusts of wind from mountain-glen
Swept o'er the lake, then sunk agen.
I heeded not the eddying surge,
Mine eye but saw the Trosachs' gorge,
Mine ear but heard the sullen sound,
Which like an earthquake shook the ground,
And spoke the stern and desperate strife
That parts not but with parting life,
Seeming, to minstrel ear, to toll
The dirge of many a passing soul.
Nearer it comes—the dim-wood glen
The martial flood disgorged agen,
But not in mingled tide;
The plaided warriors of the North
High on the mountain thunder forth
And overhang its side;
While by the lake below appears
The dark'ning cloud of Saxon spears.
At weary bay each shatter'd band,
Eyeing their foemen, sternly stand;

Their banners stream like tatter'd sail,
That flings its fragments to the gale,
And broken arms and disarray
Mark'd the fell havoc of the day.

XX

"Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
The Saxon stood in sullen trance,
Till Moray pointed with his lance,
And cried—'Behold yon isle!—
See! none are left to guard its strand,
But women weak, that wring the hand:
'Tis there of yore the robber band
Their booty wont to pile;—
My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
And loose a shallop from the shore.
Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,
Lords of his mate, and brood, and den.'
Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,
On earth his casque and corselet rung,
He plunged him in the wave:—
All saw the deed—the purpose knew,
And to their clamours Benvenue
A mingled echo gave;
The Saxons shout, their mate to cheer,
The helpless females scream for fear,
And yells for rage the mountaineer.

'Twas then, as by the outcry riven,
Pour'd down at once the lowering heaven;
A whirlwind swept Loch Katrine's breast,
Her billows rear'd their snowy crest.
Well for the swimmer swell'd they high,
To mar the Highland marksman's eye;
For round him shower'd, 'mid rain and hail,
The vengeful arrows of the Gael.—
In vain—He nears the isle—and lo!
His hand is on a shallop's bow.
—Just then a flash of lightning came,
It tinged the waves and strand with flame;—
I mark'd Duncraggan's widow'd dame,
Behind an oak I saw her stand,
A naked dirk gleam'd in her hand:—
It darken'd,—but, amid the moan
Of waves, I heard a dying groan;—
Another flash!—the spearman floats
A weltering corse beside the boats,
And the stern matron o'er him stood,
Her hand and dagger streaming blood.

XXI

"'Revenge! revenge!' the Saxons cried,
The Gaels' exulting shout replied.
Despite the elemental rage,
Again they hurried to engage;
But, ere they closed in desperate fight,

Bloody with spurring came a knight,
Sprung from his horse, and, from a crag,
Waved 'twixt the hosts a milk-white flag.
Clarion and trumpet by his side
Rung forth a truce-note high and wide,
While, in the Monarch's name, afar
An herald's voice forbade the war,
For Bothwell's lord, and Roderick bold,
Were both, he said, in captive hold."
—But here the lay made sudden stand,
The harp escaped the Minstrel's hand!—
Oft had he stolen a glance, to spy
How Roderick brook'd his minstrelsy:
At first, the Chieftain, to the chime,
With lifted hand, kept feeble time;
That motion ceased,—yet feeling strong
Varied his look as changed the song;
At length, no more his deafen'd ear
The minstrel melody can hear;
His face grows sharp,—his hands are clench'd,
As if some pang his heart-strings wrench'd;
Set are his teeth, his fading eye
Is sternly fix'd on vacancy;
Thus, motionless, and moanless, drew
His parting breath, stout Roderick Dhu!—
Old Allan-bane look'd on aghast,
While grim and still his spirit pass'd;
But when he saw that life was fled,
He pour'd his wailing o'er the dead.

XXII

LAMENT

"And art thou cold and lowly laid,
Thy foeman's dread, thy people's aid,
Breadalbane's boast, Clan-Alpine's shade!
For thee shall none a requiem say?
—For thee,—who loved the minstrel's lay,
For thee, of Bothwell's house the stay,
The shelter of her exiled line,
E'en in this prison-house of thine
I'll wail for Alpine's honour'd Pine!

"What groans shall yonder valleys fill!
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill!
What tears of burning rage shall thrill,
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,
Thy fall before the race was won,
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!
There breathes not clansman of thy line,
But would have given his life for thine.—
O woe for Alpine's honour'd Pine!

"Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—
The captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prison'd eagle dies for rage.
Brave spirit, do not scorn my strain!
And, when its notes awake again,
Even she, so long beloved in vain,
Shall with my harp her voice combine,

And mix her woe and tears with mine,
To wail Clan-Alpine's honour'd Pine."—

XXIII

Ellen, the while, with bursting heart,
Remain'd in lordly bower apart,
Where play'd, with many colour'd gleams,
Through storied pane the rising beams.
In vain on gilded roof they fall,
And lighten'd up a tapestried wall,
And for her use a menial train
A rich collation spread in vain.
The banquet proud, the chamber gay,
Scarce drew one curious glance astray;
Or if she look'd, 'twas but to say,
With better omen dawn'd the day
In that lone isle, where waved on high
The dun-deer's hide for canopy;
Where oft her noble father shared
The simple meal her care prepared,
While Lufra, crouching by her side,
Her station claim'd with jealous pride,
And Douglas, bent on woodland game,
Spoke of the chase to Malcolm Græme,
Whose answer, oft at random made,
The wandering of his thoughts betray'd.—
Those who such simple joys have known,
Are taught to prize them when they're gone.

But sudden, see, she lifts her head!
The window seeks with cautious tread.
What distant music has the power
To win her in this woeful hour!
'Twas from a turret that o'erhung
Her latticed bower, the strain was sung.

XXIV

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED HUNTSMAN

"My hawk is tired of perch and hood,
My idle greyhound loathes his food,
My horse is weary of his stall,
And I am sick of captive thrall.
I wish I were as I have been,
Hunting the hart in forest green,
With bended bow and bloodhound free,
For that's the life is meet for me.
I hate to learn the ebb of time,
From yon dull steeple's drowsy chime,
Or mark it as the sunbeams crawl,
Inch after inch, along the wall.
The lark was wont my matins ring,
The sable rook my vespers sing;
These towers, although a king's they be,
Have not a hall of joy for me.
No more at dawning morn I rise,
And sun myself in Ellen's eyes,
Drive the fleet deer the forest through,
And homeward wend with evening dew;

A blithesome welcome blithely meet,
And lay my trophies at her feet,
While fled the eve on wing of glee,—
That life is lost to love and me!"

XXV

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,
The list'ner had not turn'd her head,
It trickled still, the starting tear,
When light a footstep struck her ear,
And Snowdoun's graceful knight was near
She turn'd the hastier, lest again
The prisoner should renew his strain.
"O welcome, brave Fitz-James!" she said;
"How may an almost orphan maid
Pay the deep debt"—"O say not so!
To me no gratitude you owe.
Not mine, alas! the boon to give,
And bid thy noble father live;
I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,
With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.
No tyrant he, though ire and pride
May lay his better mood aside.
Come, Ellen, come! 'tis more than time,
He holds his court at morning prime."
With beating heart, and bosom wrung,
As to a brother's arm she clung.
Gently he dried the falling tear,
And gently whisper'd hope and cheer;

Her faltering steps, half led, half staid,
Through gallery fair, and high arcade,
Till, at his touch, its wings of pride
A portal arch unfolded wide.

XXVI

Within 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright;
It glow'd on Ellen's dazzled sight,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer even,
And from their tissue, fancy frames
Aërial knights and fairy dames.
Still by Fitz-James her footing staid;
A few faint steps she forward made,
Then slow her drooping head she raised,
And fearful round the presence gazed;
For him she sought, who own'd this state,
The dreaded Prince whose will was fate!—
She gazed on many a princely port,
Might well have ruled a royal court;
On many a splendid garb she gazed,—
Then turn'd bewildered and amazed,
For all stood bare; and, in the room,
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
To him each lady's look was lent;
On him each courtier's eye was bent;
Midst furs and silks and jewels sheen,
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,

The centre of the glittering ring,—
And Snowdoun's Knight is Scotland's King.

XXVII

As wreath of snow, on mountain-breast,
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,
And at the Monarch's feet she lay;
No word her choking voice commands,—
She show'd the ring—she clasped her hands.
O! not a moment could he brook,
The generous Prince, that suppliant look!
Gently he raised her,—and, the while,
Check'd with a glance the circle's smile;
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kiss'd,
And bade her terrors be dismiss'd: —
"Yes, Fair; the wandering poor Fitz-James
The fealty of Scotland claims.
To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring;
He will redeem his signet-ring.
Ask nought for Douglas;—yester even,
His prince and he have much forgiven.
Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue,
I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.
We would not, to the vulgar crowd,
Yield what they craved with clamour loud;
Calmly we heard and judged his cause,
Our council aided, and our laws.

I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern,
With Stout De Vaux and Grey Glencairn;
And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own
The friend and bulwark of our Throne.—
But, lovely infidel, how now?
What clouds thy misbelieving brow?
Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid;
Thou must confirm this doubting maid."

XXVIII

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,
And on his neck his daughter hung.
The Monarch drank, that happy hour,
The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—
When it can say, with godlike voice,
Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice!
Yet would not James the general eye
On Nature's raptures long should pry;
He stepp'd between—"Nay, Douglas, nay
Steal not my proselyte away!
The riddle 'tis my right to read,
That brought this happy chance to speed.
—Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray
In life's more low but happier way,
'Tis under name which veils my power,
Nor falsely veils—for Stirling's tower
Of yore the name of Snowdoun claims,
And Normans call me James Fitz-James.

Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,
Thus learn to right the injured cause."—
Then, in a tone apart and low,—
"Ah, little traitress! none must know
What idle dream, what lighter thought,
What vanity full dearly bought,
Join'd to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew
My spell-bound steps to Benvenue,
In dangerous hour, and all but gave
Thy Monarch's life to mountain glaive!"—
Aloud he spoke—"Thou still dost hold
That little talisman of gold,
Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James's ring—
What seeks fair Ellen of the King?"

XXIX

Full well the conscious maiden guess'd
He probed the weakness of her breast;
But, with that consciousness, there came
A lightening of her fears for Græme,
And more she deem'd the Monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who, for her sire
Rebellious broadsword boldly drew;
And, to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.
"Forbear thy suit:—the King of kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings.
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand:—

My fairest earldom would I give
To bid Clan-Alpine's Chieftain live!—
Hast thou no other boon to crave?
No other captive friend to save?"
Blushing, she turn'd her from the King,
And to the Douglas gave the ring,
As if she wish'd her sire to speak
The suit that stain'd her glowing cheek.—
"Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,
And stubborn justice holds her course.—
Malcolm, come forth!"—and, at the word,
Down kneel'd the Graeme to Scotland's Lord.
"For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,
Who, nurtur'd underneath our smile,
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,
And sought, amid thy faithful clan,
A refuge for an outlaw'd man,
Dishonouring thus thy loyal name.—
Fetters and warder for the Græme!"——
His chain of gold the King unstrung,
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

Harp of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,
The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.

Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy;
Thy numbers sweet with nature's vespers blending,
With distant echo from the fold and lea,
And herd-boy's evening pipe, and hum of housing bee.

Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel harp!
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,
And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay.
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known,
When on the weary night dawn'd wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devour'd alone.
That I o'erlived such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

Hark! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,
Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string!
'Tis now a seraph bold, with touch of fire,
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing.
Receding now, the dying numbers ring
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring
A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—
And now, 'tis silent all!—Enchantress, fare thee well!

NOTES

CANTO FIRST

Int. 2. *Witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring.* The well or spring of St. Fillans is on the summit of a hill near Loch Earn, some miles northeast of the scene of the poem. The reason why Scott places the "Harp of the North" here is that St. Fillan was the favorite saint of Robert Bruce, and a relic of the saint had been borne in a shrine by a warlike abbot at the battle of Bannockburn. The word "witch" (more properly spelled "wych") is connected with "wicker," and means "bending," "drooping."

10. *Caledon.* Caledonia, poetic name for Scotland.

I, 2. *Monan's rill.* Scott takes the liberty of assigning a "rill" to this Scottish martyr of the fourth century on his own authority, unless his editors have been at fault in failing to discover the stream indicated.

4. *Glenartney's.* Glen Artney or Valley of the Artney. The Artney is a small river northeast of the main scene of the poem.

6. *Benvoirlich.* "Ben" is Scottish for mountain. Benvoirlich is near the western end of Glenartney.

II, 16. *Uam-Var.* A mountain between Glenartney and the Braes of Doune. The name signifies "great den," and is derived from a rocky enclosure on the mountain-side, believed to have been used in primitive times as a toil or trap for deer. As told in Stanza IV a giant was fabled to have inhabited this den.

III, 18. *Linn.* This word means either "waterfall" or "steep ravine." The latter is probably the meaning here.

V, 4. *Menteith.* A village and district southeast of the line of lakes, Loch Katrine, Loch Achray,

and Loch Vennachar, about which the main action of the poem moves.

8. *Lochard.* Loch Ard, a small lake south of Loch Katrine. *Aberfoyle.* A village east of Loch Ard.

10. *Loch-Achray.* See note on I. v. 4.

12. *Benvenue.* A mountain on the south bank of Loch Katrine.

VI, 2. *Cambusmore.* An estate owned by Scott's friends, the Buchanans, on the border of the Braes of Doune.

4. *Benledi.* A majestic mountain shutting in the horizon to the north of Loch Vennachar.

5. *Bochastle's heath.* The plain between Loch Vennachar and the river Teith.

11. *Brigg of Turk.* A romantic bridge, still in existence, between Loch Vennachar and Loch Achray.

VII, 7. *Dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed.* A breed of dogs, usually black in color, very keen of scent and powerful in build, were kept by the abbots of St. Hubert in commemoration of their patron saint, who was a hunter.

VIII, 8. *Whinyard.* Obsolete term for sword.

15. *Trosachs.* A wild and beautiful defile between Loch Katrine and Loch Achray. The word signifies "rough or bristled country."

IX, 15. *Woe worth the chase.* "Woe worth" is an exclamation, equivalent to "alack!"

X, 11. *Round and around the sounds were cast.* Notice the mimicry of the echo in the vowel sounds of the line.

XI, 13. *Tower . . . on Shinar's plain.* The Tower of Babel.

25. *Dewdrops sheen.* What part of speech is "sheen?" Is this use of the word obsolete in prose?

XII, 16. *Frequent flung.* "Frequent" is used in the original Latin sense (Lat. *frequens*) of "crowded together," "numerous."

XIV, 3. *Unless he climb, with footing nice.* Scott says: "Until the present road was made through the romantic pass I have presumptuously attempted to describe, there was no mode of issuing out of the defile called the Trosachs,

excepting by a sort of ladder, composed of the branches and roots of trees." What is the meaning of "nice" here? What other meanings has the word had?

XVI, 13. *Highland plunderers.* The clans inhabiting the region about Loch Katrine were in the habit of making incursions into the neighboring Lowlands to plunder and lay waste the country. Their warlike habits were fostered by the rugged and almost inaccessible character of the country, which prevented the Lowlanders from retaliating upon them, and enabled them also to resist the royal authority.

XIX, 2. *Snood.* A ribbon worn by Scotch lassies, and upon marriage replaced by the matron's "curch" or cap. *Plaid.* A rectangular shawl-like garment made of the checkered cloth called tartan.

XXII, 8. *Couch was pull'd.* Freshly pulled heather was the most luxurious bedding known to the Highlander.

10 *Ptarmigan and heath-cock.* These birds are species of grouse, the one red, the other black.

XXIII, 8. *On the vision'd future bent.* The gift of second-sight was universally believed in at this period in the Highlands.

XXV, 11. *Retreat in dangerous hour.* "The Celtic chieftains, whose lives were continually exposed to peril, had usually, in the most retired spot of their domain, some place of retreat for the hour of necessity . . . a tower, a cavern, or a rustic hut." (Scott's note in edition of 1830.)

XXVII, 13. *Target.* What is the connection of this word with that used in archery and gun-practice?

XXVIII, 7. *Brook to wield.* "Brook" commonly means "endure." What is its exact meaning here?

14. *Ferragus, or Ascabart.* Two giants whose names appear frequently in mediæval romances of chivalry. The first is better known as Ferran, under which name he figures in the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. Ascabart plays a part in the old English metrical romance of Sir Bevis of Hampton.

XXIX, 5. *To whom, though more than kindred knew.* This is a very obscure expression for Scott, who is usually so careful to make himself clear. The meaning seems to be: Ellen regarded her as a mother, though that was more than the actual kinship of the two justified (literally "knew how to recognize").

16. *Knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James.* As appears later in the poem, these were not his true name and title, though he was entitled to bear them.

XXX, 21. . . . *a harp unseen*
Filled up the symphony between.
In modern Scotland the bag-pipe has altogether taken the place of the harp. A writer of the sixteenth century says: "They (the Highlanders) take great delight to deck their harps with silver and precious stones; the poor ones that cannot attain thereunto deck them with crystal. They sing verses prettily compound (i. e., composed) containing for the most part praises of valiant men."

XXXI, 15. *Pibroch.* (Pronounced pee-brock.) A wild tumultuous tune played on the bag-pipes in the onset of battle.

19. *Bittern.* A wading bird, allied to the heron.

XXXII, 10. *Reveillé.* As the rhyme shows, this word is pronounced *reh-vail'yah* here. This is the common pronunciation everywhere except in the United States army, where the word is pronounced *rev-a-lee'*. It is the drum-beat or bugle-call at dawn to arouse soldiers.

CANTO SECOND

I, 1. *Black-cock.* See note to I. xxii. 1.

7. *Minstrel grey.* Until well on in the eighteenth century it was customary for Highland chieftains to keep in their service a bard, whose chief duty it was to sing the exploits of the ancestors of the line.

V 4. *Lead forth his fleet.* What kind of figure is contained in the word "fleet" as applied to the flock of ducks?

VII, 18. *Harp, which erst Saint Modan sway'd.* St. Modan was not a harper, as Scott elsewhere

ingenuously confesses, adding, however, that "Saint Dunstan certainly did play upon that instrument."

VIII, 8. *Wail'd loud through Bothwell's banner'd hall,*
Ere Douglasses to ruin driven,
Were exiled from their native heaven.
The minstrel tries to account for the strange way in which his harp gives back mournful sounds instead of the joyous ones he is trying to evoke, by calling to Ellen's mind two other occasions when it behaved similarly. One of these was when it foreboded the death of Ellen's mother; the other when it foreboded the exile of the Douglasses during the minority of James V. For particulars, see the introduction on the historical setting of the poem. Bothwell castle is on the Clyde, a few miles from Glasgow.

IX, 6. *From Tweed to Spey.* The Tweed is in the extreme southern part, the Spey in the northern part, of Scotland.

X, 16. *Lady of the Bleeding Heart.* The minstrel calls Ellen so because a bleeding heart was the heraldic emblem of the Douglas family.

XI, 6. *Strathspey.* A lively dance, named from the district of Strath Spey, in the north of Scotland. It resembled the reel, but was slower.

13. *Clan-Alpine's pride.* Clan Alpine was the collective name of the followers of Roderick Dhu, who figures later in the poem as Ellen's rejected suitor and the enemy of the mysterious "Knight of Snowdoun" who has just taken his departure from the island.

16. *Lennox foray.* Lennox is the district south of Menteith, in the Lowlands. It was the scene of innumerable forays and "cattle-drives."

XII 5. *In Holy-Rood a knight he slew.* Holy-Rood is the royal castle at Edinburgh, where the court usually was held. It was deemed a heinous and desperate offense to commit an act of blood in the royal residence or its immediate neighborhood, since such an act was an indirect violation of the majesty of the king, and a breaking of "the king's peace." It was for this offense

that Roderick Dhu was exiled, and compelled to live like an outlaw in his mountain fastness.

11. *Who else dared give.* Notice how skilfully Scott manages to give us the relations of the chief characters of the poem to each other, and to show that Ellen's father, pursued by the hatred of James V, has been given the island shelter in Loch Katrine by Roderick Dhu who is about to make his appearance in the story.

20. *Full soon may dispensation sought,*
To back his suit, from Rome be brought.

A papal dispensation was necessary, because Ellen and Roderick Dhu were cousins. See next note.

XIII, 4. *All that a mother could bestow,*
To Lady Margaret's care I owe.

Here again the poet takes the indirect way of making clear his point, namely that the matron introduced in the first canto is the mother of Roderick Dhu. The phrase "an orphan in the wild," is in apposition with the following phrase "her sister's child"—i. e., Ellen herself. From this it appears that Lady Margaret is Ellen's aunt, and that Roderick Dhu is, therefore, Ellen's cousin.

10. *Maronnan's cell.* A chapel at the eastern extremity of Loch Lomond, dedicated to the rather obscure saint here named.

XIV, 4. *Bracklinn's thundering wave.* The reference is to a cascade made by a mountain torrent at the Bridge of Bracklinn, near the village of Callender in Menteith. Notice how Scott's numerous references to places in the region where the poem is laid tend gradually to give us an idea of the richness and diversity of the landscape.

8. *Claymore.* A large two-handed sword.

XV, 3. *Thy father's battle-brand, of yore*
For Tine-man forged by fairy lore,
. . . . . .
Did, self-unscabbarded, foreshow
The footstep of a secret foe.

Some swords, especially those which had been magically forged, were held to possess the prop-

erty of drawing themselves from their scabbard at the approach of their owner's deadly enemy. This is the first vague hint which Scott gives us as to the real identity of the "Knight of Snowdoun." To throw a further glamor of romance about the prophetical weapon, he tells us that it was given by fairies to an ancestor of its present owner, namely, to Archibald, third Duke of Angus, called Tine-man (Loseman) because he always lost his men in battle, and that this gift was made while Archibald was in league with Harry Hotspur.

17. *Beltane game.* The sports of May-day.

25. *Canna.* Cotton grass.

XVI. In this and the two following stanzas notice how skilfully description and narrative are woven together, and how the picture gains in detail and distinctness as the boats approach.

4. *Barges.* What change has occurred in the use of this word?

5. *Glengyle . . . Brianchoil.* Why does the poet introduce these proper names? Are they of any value as information?

13. *Tartans.* See note to I. xix. 2.

XVIII, 11. *The chorus first could Allan know.* The chorus was the first part of the song which the harper, listening from the shore, could distinctly make out.

XIX, 10. *Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu.* The words "vich" and "dhu" are Gælic, the first meaning "descendant of," the second "black or swarthy." King Alpine was the half-mythical ancestor from whom the clan of Alpine sprung. The line means therefore, "Black Roderick, descendant of Alpine." Compare II. xii. 4, where Allan-bane calls the chieftain "Black Sir Roderick."

12. *Blooming at Beltane.* See note to II. xv. 17 above.

18. *Breadalbane.* A large district in the western part of the county of Perth.

XX, 1-8. *Glen Fruin, Bannochar, Glen Luss, Ross-dhu, Leven-glen.* What, in simple language, should you say was the value of this array of obscure names in the song?

13. *The rose-bud that graces yon islands.* To whom do the singers metaphorically refer?

XXIII, 15. *Percy's Norman pennon.* Captured by the Douglas in the raid which led to the battle of Otterburn, as celebrated in the old ballad of Chevy Chase. (Sprague.)

22. *The waned crescent.* This may be taken as referring to some victory over the Turkish armies in the East, or to the defeat of Scott's ancestor, Sir Walter Scott of Buccleugh, who was defeated in an attempt to set the young king free from the Douglas. The shield of Sir Walter bore a crescent moon.

24. *Blantyre.* A priory on the banks of the Clyde near Bothwell castle, of which ruins still remain.

XXVI, 11. *Glenfinlas.* A valley to the northeast of Loch Katrine, between Ben-An and Ben-Ledi.

14. *Royal ward.* Malcolm, as a minor, was still under the king's guardianship.

20. *Strath-Endrick glen.* A valley on the southeast of Loch Lomond, presumably Malcolm's home.

XXVIII, 19,21. The *Meggat*, the *Yarrow*, and the *Ettrick* are successive tributaries, the waters of which eventually reach the Tweed. The Teviot is also a tributary of the Tweed. All five rivers are in the southern part of Scotland.

XXX, 14. *Links of Forth.* Banks of the river Forth. In general the word "links" means flat or undulating stretches of sandy soil, partially covered with grass or heather.

XXXI, 1. *There are who have.* How does this differ from the prose idiom?

XXXV, 7. . . . *pity t'were*
Such cheek should feel the midnight air.

Was there anything in the Highland character and training which would make these words seem particularly cutting? Notice how the insult is deepened later by the assumption on Roderick Dhu's part that Malcolm is capable of treachery toward Douglas and the Clan of Alpine.

15. *Henchman.* This word is said to have been originally "haunch-man" because it was the

duty of this retainer to stand beside his master's chair (at his haunches as it were) at the feast, in readiness to do his bidding or to defend him if attacked.

XXXVI, 5. *Fiery Cross.* The signal for the gathering of the clan to war. The preparation and carrying abroad of this cross is described in the next canto.

CANTO THIRD

II, 21. *Cushat dove.* Better known as the ring-dove.

IV, 3. *Shivers.* "Slivers" is the more common word, but the verb "to shiver," meaning to break in pieces, keeps near the original meaning.

14. *Benharrow.* This mountain is near the north end of Loch Lomond.

27. *Strath.* A wide open valley, distinguished from a glen, which is narrow.

V, 14. *Field-fare.* A species of thrush.

26. *Virgin snood.* See note to I xvi. 2.

VII, 6. *River Demon.* Concerning this creature Scott gives the current observation: "The River Demon, or River-horse, is an evil spirit, delighting to forebode and witness calamity. He frequents most Highland lakes and rivers; and one of his most memorable exploits was performed upon the banks of Loch Vennachar: it consisted in the destruction of a bridal party with all its attendants." The "noontide hag" was a gigantic emaciated female figure which, contrary to the general rule of ghostly creatures, appeared in the full blaze of noon.

20. *Ben-Shie's boding scream.* The ben-shie or banshee was a tutelar spirit, supposed to forebode by midnight howlings the death of a member of a family to which it was attached. The superstition is still prevalent in Ireland.

VIII, 13. *Inch-Cailliach* An island in Loch Lomond, used as a place of burial for several neighboring clans, of whom the descendants of King Alpine were the chief. The name means "Isle of Nuns," or "Isle of Old Women."

IX. Notice the change in the rhyme system which marks the break from flowing narrative to solemn dramatic speech, and is continued

through the stanza to increase the effect of solemnity.

X, 31. *Coir-Uriskin, thy goblin cave.* This cave and the pass of Beala-nam-bo were on the slopes of Ben Venue, a mountain near Loch Katrine. See notes to xxvi. and xxvii. below.

XII, 5. *Lanrick mead.* This meadow is still pointed out to the traveller on the road from Loch Vennachar to the Trosachs.

XIII, 1. *Dun deer's hide.* It was their shoes made of untanned deer's hide, with the hair outwards, which gave the Highlander's their nickname, "Red-shanks."

XV, 2. *Duncraggan.* A village between Loch Achray and Loch Vennachar.

22. *Coronach.* Death-song.

XVI, 17. *Correi.* Scott explains this as "the hollow side of the hill, where game usually lies."

18. *Cumber.* Trouble, perplexity.

XVII, 1. *Stumah.* The name of a dog, signifying "faithful."

XIX, 10. *Chapel of St. Bride.* This chapel stood on the knoll of Strath-Ire, mentioned at the beginning of the stanza, halfway up the pass of Leny. Scott is singularly careful not to take liberties with the geography of the localities where his story is laid.

17. *Pole-axe.* An old weapon consisting of a broad axe-head fastened to a long pole, with a prick at the back.

XX, 3 *Tombea's Mary.* Tombea and Armandave are names of places in the vicinity of Strath-Ire.

XXIII, 2 *Bracken.* Fern.

XXIV, 2 *Balquidder.* The braes of Balquidder extended west from Loch Voil, to the northward of the scene of the poem. *Midnight blaze*; the heather on the moorlands is often set on fire by the shepherds in order that new herbage may spring up.

10. *Loch Voil*, etc. This and the following names are of poetic value in suggesting tangibly the rapid passage of the runner from place to place.

XXV, 22. *Coir-nan-Uriskin.* Scott says that this name, signifying "Den of the Shaggy Men,"

was derived from the mythical inhabitants of the place, creatures half-man and half-goat, resembling the satyrs of classical mythology.

XXVI, 17. *Stul.* Stillness. Can you instance other cases of the use of adjective for noun?

32. *Satyrs.* See note to xxv. 22 above.

XXVII, 6. *Beal-nam-bo.* The name signifies "Pass of cattle." It is described as a "most magnificent glade, overhung with aged birch-trees, a little higher up the mountain than the Coir-nan-Uriskin."

14. *A single page, to bear his sword.* The sword bearer, like the henchman and the bard, was a regular officer attached to the person of a Highland Chief. He was called in Gaelic "Gilliemore," or sword-man.

CANTO FOURTH

II, 10. *Braes of Doune.* Doune is a village on the Teith, a few miles northwest of Stirling. The word "brae" means slope or declivity; the braes of Doune stretch away east and north from the village.

III, 5. *Boune.* An obsolete word meaning "prepared."

IV, 9. *Taghairm.* The word means "Augury of the Hide."

14. *When swept our merry-men Gallangad.* The reference is to one of the forays or "cattle-drives" which the Highland chiefs were fond of making at the expense of their neighbors. The situation of Gallangad is now unknown, but it was presumably a portion of the Lennox district.

19. *Kernes.* The kern or cateran of the Highlands was a light-armed infantryman, as opposed to the heavy-armed "gallowglass."

24. *Scatheless.* Without fear of injury, because of the weariness of the animal after the march.

V, 4. *Boss.* The word means knob or protuberance, especially that in the center of a shield. What the boss of a cliff can be it is a little difficult to understand.

20. *Watching while the deer is broke.* The cutting up of the deer and allotting of the various por-

tions was technically known as the "breaking" of the deer. A certain gristly portion was given, by long custom, to the birds, and came to be known as "the raven's bone."

VII, 7. *A spy has sought my land.* Roderick refers, as appears later, to the "Knight of Snowdoun' of Canto I.

VIII, 1. *Glaive.* Sword.

4. *Sable pale.* An heraldic term, applied to a black perpendicular stripe in a coat of arms.

25. *Stance.* Station, foundation.

X, 25. *Cambus-kenneth's fane.* The ruins of Cambus-kenneth Abbey are still to be seen on the banks of the Forth near Stirling.

XII, 2. *Mavis and merle.* Thrush and blackbird.

23. *Darkling was the battle tried.* Scott first wrote "blindfold" in place of "darkling."

25. *Pall.* A rich cloth, from which mantles of noblemen were made. *Vair.* A fur much used for the garments of nobility in mediæval times.

XIII, 6. *Wonn'd.* An obsolete equivalent of "dwelt."

14. *Fairies' fatal green.* The elves or gnomes wore green, and were angered when any mortal ventured to wear that color. For this or some other reason green was held an unlucky color in many parts of Scotland.

16. *Thou wert christen'd man.* Urgan, as appears later, was a mortal, who had fallen under the spell of the elves and lived their life, but who still retained some of the privileges and immunities which belonged, according to mediæval belief, to all persons who had been baptized into the Christian church.

XV, 32. *Dunfermline.* An Abbey sixteen miles northwest of Edinburgh.

XVI, 13. *My former guide.* This is Red Murdoch, of whom Roderick Dhu speaks in IV. i.

XXII, 5. The *Allan* and the *Devan* are two streams which descend from the hills of Perthshire into the lowland plain.

XXIII, 13. *From Maudlin's charge.* Maudlin, as a proper name, is a corruption of Magdalen. The curious development of meaning which has taken place in the word should be looked out in the dictionary.

17. *Peasant pitch'd a bar.* "Pitching the bar" was a feat of strength like the modern "putting the shot." It was usually indulged in by the peasantry at fairs and on the village greens.

22. *That savage groom.* The mad woman refers to Red Murdoch, the guide.

XXV, 5. *A stag of ten.* With ten branches on his antlers.

CANTO FIFTH

III, 11. *Shingles.* Declivities or "slides" of small broken stone.

VI, 13. *While Albany, with feeble hand,*
Held borrow'd truncheon of command.
After the death of James IV at Flodden Field the regency was held first by the mother of the young king, and then by the Duke of Albany. The latter was forced by the Estates to leave Scotland in 1624, and soon after the regency fell practically, though, not constitutionally, into the hands of the king's step-father, Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus. See introduction on the historical setting of the poem.

IX, 3. *Curlew.* A shore-bird, with a long curved bill.

X, 26. *Jack.* A coat of mail made of leather or heavy padded cloth.

XII, 6. *On Bochastle the mouldering lines, etc.* East of Lake Vennachar, in the moor of Bochastle, are some traces of the Roman occupation, in the form of mounds and intrenchments.

XVI, 7. *Mountain-cat.* "Catamount" is the common name in America.

XVII, 25. *Palfrey.* A saddle-horse as distinguished from a war-horse.

29. *Weed.* Garment. The word is now restricted to the phrase "widow's weeds."

XVIII, 21-28. *Torry, Lendrick, Deanstown, Doune, Blair-Drummond, Ochtertyre,* and *Kier,* are all on the Teith, between Bochastle and Stirling.

XIX, 20. *By Saint Serle.* The necessities of rhyme compel the poet to choose a very obscure saint from the calendar.

27. *Postern gate.* The small rear gate of a castle, generally used by the servants only.

XXI, 10. *Jennet.* A small Spanish horse, originally a cross between native and Arabian stock.

XXIV, 3. *Morricers.* Morrice-dancers. The morrice or morris was an old dance, imported into England from Spain. Believed to be a corruption of "Moorish."

5. *Butts.* The targets for archery practice.

6. *Bold Robin Hood and all his band.* It is of course not meant that the renowned outlaw himself and his followers were there, but masqueraders representing these traditional characters. All the names that follow occur in one or other of the legends and ballads which gathered about Robin Hood's name.

14. *The white.* i. e., the white center of the target.

XXIV, 2. *Ladies' Rock.* A hillock between the Castle and Gray-friar's church, from which the court ladies viewed the games.

XXXII, 19. *Lily lawn.* A conventional phrase in old ballad poetry, without any very definite meaning.

CANTO SIXTH

II, 24. *Harness.* Armor and other war-gear.

III, 18. *Halberd.* A weapon consisting of a battle-axe and pike at the end of a long staff. *Brand.* A poetical word for sword.

V 3. *Black-jack.* A large drinking can of tarred or waxed leather.

6. *Drink upsees out.* "Upsees" is a corruption of a Dutch Bacchanalian interjection.

14. *Cure.* Parish or charge. *Placket.* Petticoat.

15. *Lurch.* Swindle, leave in difficulty.

XIII, 1. *Prore.* Poetical form of "prow."

XV, 9. *Erne.* Eagle.

XVII. Notice how both rhyme and rhythm mirror the growing excitement of the conflict.

26. *As their Tinchel cows the game.* The "Tinchel" was a circle of hunters, surrounding a herd of deer and gradually closing in on them.

XVIII, 34. *Linn.* The word here means waterfall.

XXI, 13. *Bothwell's lord.* Douglas. See note to II. viii. 8.

18. *How Roderick brooked his minstrelsy.* "Brooked" is not used in its strong sense of "endured," but in the weaker one of "received"; we should say colloquially "how he took it."

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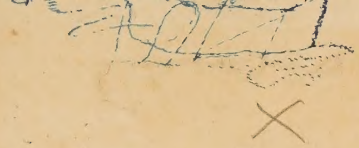

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